

# **The Holy Word for Morning Revival**

**International Training for Elders  
and Responsible Ones—March 2017**

**COOPERATING WITH THE HEAVENLY MINISTRY  
OF THE ASCENDED CHRIST**

**General Subject:**

**Cooperating With The Heavenly Ministry  
Of The Ascended Christ**

**TITLE**

Week 1: Seeking the Things Which Are Above

Week 2: The Apostolic Ministry in Cooperation with Christ's Heavenly Ministry to Shepherd the Church of God as His Flock for the Building Up of the Body of Christ

Week 3: The Pattern of the Apostle Paul in Cooperating with Christ's Heavenly Ministry to Shepherd People for the Building Up of the Body of Christ

Week 4: Propagating the Resurrected Christ under the Heavenly Ministry of the Ascended Christ

Week 5: The Revelation, Experience, and Enjoyment of the Ascended Christ as a Merciful, Faithful, and Great High Priest

Week 6: Responding to Christ's Intercession in His Heavenly Ministry

Week 7: Practicing the Church Life under the Ministry of Christ as the Minister of the True, the Heavenly, Tabernacle

Week 8: Cooperating with Christ in His Heavenly Ministry by Running with Endurance the Race Set before Us, Looking Away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of Our Faith

# WEEK 1 — OUTLINE

## Seeking the Things Which Are Above

Scripture Reading: Col. 3:1-2; Eph. 2:5-6; Heb. 4:12; 1 Cor. 2:14-15

### « DAY 1 »

I. “If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1):

A. In ascension Christ is the One who is sitting at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3; 12:2; Rom. 8:34):

1. The right hand of God signifies preeminence, the first place of honor.
2. The right hand of God is the first and highest place in the universe, and God has put the ascended Christ there, giving the preeminence and the highest honor in the entire universe to Christ (Heb. 1:13; 8:1; 10:12).

B. God not only saved us from the position of death, but He also seated us with Christ in the highest place in the universe (Eph. 2:5-6):

### « DAY 2 »

1. It was in Christ that God seated us all together, once for all, in the heavenlies.
2. This was accomplished when Christ ascended to the heavens, and it has been applied to us by the Spirit of Christ ever since we believed in Him.
3. Today we realize and experience this reality in our spirit through faith in the accomplished fact (v. 8; 1 Pet. 1:8; Heb. 11:1).

C. The things which are above are the things which are in the heavens, in contrast to the things which are on the earth (Col. 3:1-2):

1. The things which are above include the ascended Christ and all things related to Him.
2. The things on the earth include culture, religion, philosophy, and the improvement in behavior (2:8, 16, 18-23).

D. In order to seek the things which are above, we must be where these things are; because we have one position with Christ in His ascension (Eph. 2:6), we can seek the things which are above.

### « DAY 3 »

E. According to the New Testament, the things which are above include Christ's ascension, His enthronement, and His being made the Head, the Lord, and the

Christ:

1. Acts 2:36 says that God has made Jesus in His ascension both Lord and Christ; He was made the Lord of all to possess all; and He was made Christ, God's anointed One (Heb. 1:9), to carry out God's commission.

## << DAY 4 >>

2. In ascension Christ has been made the Head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22):

- a. To the church implies a kind of transmission.
- b. Whatever Christ, the Head, has attained and obtained is transmitted to the church, His Body.
- c. In this transmission the church shares with Christ in all His attainments: the resurrection from the dead, His being seated in His transcendence, the subjection of all things under His feet, and the headship over all things (vv. 19-23).

3. The Lord Jesus has been crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9); He is the Pioneer, who has cut the way into glory within the veil, and the Forerunner (6:19-20); He is our High Priest and the Minister of the true tabernacle (8:2); and, as the enthroned One, He is the center of God's administration according to God's eternal economy (Rev. 5:6).

4. Such things are the things which are above, and we should set our mind on them (Col. 3:2).

5. To seek the things which are above is to respond to and reflect Christ's activities in His heavenly ministry (Heb. 2:17; 4:14; 7:26; 8:1-2; Rev. 5:6; Col. 3:1-2).

## << DAY 5 >>

**II. In order to seek the things which are above and to set our mind on them, we need to turn to our spirit and experience the dividing of the soul from the spirit (Heb. 4:12):**

A. Only when we are in our spirit are we in heaven and mind the things which are above; when we are outside our spirit, we are earthly and mind the things which are on the earth (Col. 3:2):

1. The way to seek the things which are above is to turn to our spirit and call on the name of the Lord (Rom. 8:16; 10:12).

2. There is a transmission taking place from Christ in heaven to us on earth by means of the all-inclusive Spirit in our spirit (Eph. 1:19, 22-23; 2:22):

- a. Our spirit is the receiving end of the divine transmission, whereas the throne of God in heaven is the transmitting end (Rev. 5:6).

- b. By turning to our spirit, we are lifted into heaven (4:1-2).
- c. Because of the transmission from the throne of God in heaven into our spirit, when we experience and enjoy Christ here on earth, we are simultaneously in heaven.
- d. In spirit we are one in position with Christ, seeking the things which are above (Col. 3:1).

## « DAY 6 »

B. We need to experience the dividing of the soul from the spirit (Heb. 4:12):

1. First Thessalonians 5:23 shows that the soul and the spirit are not the same but are two separate items; there is a great difference between the soul and the spirit.
  2. The soul and the spirit can be divided because they are two entities and are of two kinds of substances; regardless of how hidden our spirit is within our soul, they are still two distinct organs; thus, we need to experience the dividing of our soul from our spirit (Heb. 4:12).
  3. The spirit is so hidden in the soul that it needs to be divided from the soul by the living and operative word of God, which is “sharper than any two-edged sword” (v. 12).
  4. First Corinthians 2:14 and 15 speak of two kinds of persons: the soulish man and the spiritual man:
    - a. The soulish man, and the soul itself, cannot understand or receive the spiritual things (v. 14).
    - b. The spiritual man discerns the spiritual things and likes to receive the spiritual things and to know and experience the things which are above (v. 15).
    - c. It is by the spirit that we understand and discern the spiritual things, and it is in the spirit that we desire to have the spiritual things.
- C. By experiencing the dividing of our soul from our spirit and by exercising our spirit, we can seek the things which are above and set our mind on them; then the riches of Christ’s heavenly ministry will be transmitted into us, and we will be transformed and constituted with Christ (Col. 3:1-2; Heb. 7:25-26; 8:1-2; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10-11).

# « WEEK 1 — DAY 1 »

## Morning Nourishment

Col. 3:1-2 If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things which are above, not on the things which are on the earth.

Eph. 2:6 ...[God] raised us up together with [Christ] and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

In Colossians 3:1 Paul says, “If therefore you were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” Notice that Paul does not speak of “things which are in the heavens” but of “things which are above.” These things are high, superior things. Our natural virtues, however, are low and inferior. In 3:2 Paul continues, “Set your mind on the things which are above, not on the things which are on the earth.” (Life-study of Colossians, p. 504)

## Today's Reading

In ascension Christ is the One who is at the right hand of God. Romans 8:34 says, “Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.” Christ died for us, He was resurrected, and He is now in the heavens at the right hand of God interceding for us. In ascension Christ is at the right hand of God. “The right hand of God” signifies preeminence, the first place of honor. The right hand of God is the first and highest place in the universe, and God has put the ascended Christ there. God has given the preeminence and the highest honor in the entire universe to Christ. Our Christ today is in the highest heaven, holding the highest position at God's right hand.

In Ephesians 2:6-8 we see that God has raised us up together with Christ and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies for our salvation by grace through faith. Verse 6 tells us that God “raised us up together with Him and seated us together with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.” To make us alive was the initial step of God's salvation in life. After this, God raised us up from the position of death. The salvation spoken of in verse 5 is the resurrection in power. By this salvation God not only made us alive together with Christ but also raised us up together with Christ and seated us together with Him.

It is noteworthy that according to verses 5 and 6 we were made alive together and raised up together. From our standpoint we have been raised up from our position of death one by one. Since there is no time element with God, in His eyes we were all raised up together at the same time that the apostles Peter, John, and Paul were raised up. In God's view we were all raised up together, just as all the Israelites were raised up together from the death waters of the Red Sea (Exo. 14). According to the book of Exodus, the entire congregation of the children of Israel was saved at the same time, for they passed through the Red Sea together. In other words, the children of Israel came out of Egypt, crossing the Red Sea not one by one at different times but as a congregation at the same time. This is a clear type showing that we were all saved together; we were all made alive and raised up at the same time.

The initial step of God's salvation in life is to make us alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:5), the second step is to raise us up from the position of death (v. 6a), and the third step is to seat us together in the heavenlies. God not only raised us up from the position of death, but He also seated us in the highest place in the universe.

The heavenlies are the highest position, into which we have been saved in Christ. In the book of Romans, Christ as our righteousness brought us into a state in which we are acceptable to God. In the book of Ephesians, Christ as our life has saved us into a position in which we are above all God's enemies. Here in the heavenly atmosphere, with a heavenly nature and a heavenly characteristic, we are a heavenly people. God's salvation has transferred us into such a realm and atmosphere. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 336, 3358-3359)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msgs. 31, 335

# « WEEK 1 — DAY 2 »

## Morning Nourishment

1 Pet. 1:8 Whom having not seen, you love; into whom though not seeing Him at present, yet believing, you exult with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

Heb. 11:1 Now faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Although we are persons living and moving on the earth, we should see ourselves seated together with Christ in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Since we are in the heavenlies in Christ, we are not under any person or problem; rather, we are far above all persons and problems....The earthly things cannot touch us, because we are transcendent. We are transcendent because we are people in the heavenlies in the organic union with Christ through His resurrection and ascension.

It was in Christ that God seated us all together, once for all, in the heavenlies. This was accomplished when Christ ascended to the heavens, and it has been applied to us by the Spirit of Christ ever since we believed in Him. Today we realize and experience this reality in our spirit through faith in the accomplished fact. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3359-3360)

## Today's Reading

Grace is God dispensed into us. Therefore, to be saved by grace means to be saved by having the processed Triune God dispensed into us. Ephesians reveals that the saving grace is God Himself in Christ wrought into our being. According to this Epistle, salvation is the transmission of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ into us. When this person comes into us as grace, we are saved. Once we receive such a divine transmission, we are made alive, raised up, and seated with Christ in the heavenlies. God processed in Christ and transmitted into our being is the saving grace and the abounding grace. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3360-3361)

The heavens are linked to Christ and joined to the church. The things above include the ascended Christ and all things pertaining to Him. Therefore, to seek the things above is to seek to live Christ in and with the church. (Col. 3:1, footnote 3)

The things on the earth include culture, religion, philosophy, and improvement in behavior, as spoken of in the preceding two chapters. (Col. 3:2, footnote 1)

Our position is that we are in Christ. Because we are in Him, we are where He is—at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1). In John 17:24 the Lord Jesus prayed, "Father, concerning that which You have given Me, I desire that they also may be with Me where I am." To be where the Lord Jesus is, is not a matter of geography. The Lord is in the Father, and He prayed that the disciples, who were not yet in the Father, would be brought into Him. The Lord prayed, therefore, that they would be where He is.

Since our position today is that we are in the Son, in Christ, we also are in the Father. The Father, of course, is in heaven. Hence, our position also is that we are in heaven. In saying this, however, we have a different understanding from that held by many Christians. Often when Christians say that we shall be in heaven, they mean that we shall be in heaven outside the Father. But when we say that we shall be in heaven, we mean that we shall be in heaven in the Father. There is a great difference here. We are in Christ, in the Father, and therefore in heaven.

If we stop here, we shall have nothing more than a mere doctrinal understanding of our one position with Christ. We shall only know the fact that we are in Christ, in the Father, and in heaven. What makes this real is that we are one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). It is when we are in the spirit that we are in Christ, in the Father, and in heaven practically and experientially.

In Colossians 3:1 Paul says that since we were raised together with Christ, we should seek the things which are above. This verse indicates clearly that we have one position with Christ. How could we seek the things which are above if we were not above also? To seek the things above we must be in heaven where these things are. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 518-520)

Further Reading: Life-study of Colossians, msgs. 57-59



# « WEEK 1 — DAY 3 »

## Morning Nourishment

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you have crucified.

Rev. 5:6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

As a child I was taught that the things above are the various features of heaven—the mansions, the pearly gates, and the golden street....According to the New Testament, the things above include Christ's ascension, His enthronement, and His being made the Head, the Lord, and the Christ. In Acts 2:36 Peter says God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. In Hebrews 2:9 we are told that the Lord Jesus has been crowned with glory and honor. In Ephesians 1:22 we see that in ascension Christ has been made Head over all things to the church. In Revelation 5:6 we see that Christ as the Lamb with seven eyes is now on the throne executing God's government. Such things are the things above. (Life-study of Colossians, p. 504)

## Today's Reading

In writing to the Colossian believers, Paul was charging them to no longer pay attention to Judaism, Gnosticism, or asceticism, all of which are elements of the world, things which are low and inferior. As those who have been raised up with Christ and who are now living with Christ in God, they should seek the things which are above and set their minds on them. Christ has been crowned and enthroned; He has been made the Lord and the Head over all things. He is even now the Lamb with seven eyes executing God's government in the universe.

Setting our mind on the things above will help us to experience Christ. The Christ whom we may experience is not only our food, drink, Sabbath, new moon, and feast. He is not only our daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly enjoyment. Our Christ is the One crowned and enthroned, the One who is the Lord and the Head, the One carrying out God's governmental administration. How much richer our enjoyment of Christ would be if we set our mind on these things! (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 504-505)

As the One in ascension, He was made Lord—the Lord of all to possess all (Acts 10:36)—and Christ—God's Anointed to carry out God's commission (Heb. 1:9). In fact, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is a proof that God has exalted the Lord Jesus and has made Him both Lord and Christ.

As God, the Lord was the Lord all the time (Luke 1:43; John 11:21; 20:28). But as man, He was made the Lord in His ascension after He brought His humanity into God in His resurrection. God has always been the Lord, but now a man is on the throne as the Lord. After Jesus was crucified and buried, God resurrected Him and set Him at His right hand, making this Jesus, a Nazarene, the Lord of all the universe.

Since the lordship of Christ was fully established in His ascension, we—the members of His Body identified with Christ the Head—only need to realize this heavenly fact (Eph. 1:20-23). Once we realize that Christ has obtained the lordship, we, the church as His Body, have to apply it.

Christ in His ascension has not only been made the Lord of all but also the Christ of God to work out the spreading of the gospel and the building up of the church that God's chosen people may be saved and perfected for the constitution of the New Jerusalem to be God's eternal habitation and manifestation according to God's New Testament economy for God's eternal satisfaction.

As the One in ascension, Christ was made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36) that He might possess all and that He might carry out God's commission through His heavenly ministry to accomplish God's plan (10:36; Heb. 1:9). (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 2978-2980)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msgs. 75-76, 290



# « WEEK 1 — DAY 4 »

## Morning Nourishment

Eph. 1:22 And He subjected all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church.

Heb. 4:14 Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession.

[In Ephesians 1:22] the expression to the church implies a kind of transmission. This transmission connects Christ in the heavens with the believers on the earth, just as an electrical current connects a power plant with electrical appliances in a building. This transmission connects the Head in the heavens with His Body on the earth [v. 23].

Whatever Christ, the Head, has attained and obtained is transmitted to the church, His Body. In this transmission the church shares with Christ in all His attainments: the resurrection from the dead, His being seated in His transcendence, the subjection of all things under His feet, and the headship over all things. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 3353)

## Today's Reading

As long as there is a transmission coming from the heavens, there will be the divine flow in the churches.

The Lord Jesus, the One crowned with glory and honor, the One who is the Lord, the Christ, the Head, the Forerunner, the High Priest, and the heavenly Minister, is executing God's operation in the heavens. He is the Lamb with seven eyes, with the seven Spirits of God, carrying out God's administration through the local churches. Actually, the churches are God's embassies. For this reason, the world situation is not under the control of any earthly head of state but under the churches through which God is executing His administration....The churches as God's embassies are an extension of the heavens. Our headquarters, our administrative center, is in heaven.

We should not be distracted, as the Colossians were, by Judaism or Greek philosophy. Look toward heaven, where there is a throne on which God is sitting and where the Lamb with seven eyes is standing to execute God's administration through the churches as His embassies.

Now do you have some understanding of the things which are above? If we know these things, we shall see that the Lord Jesus has been crowned with glory and honor, that God has made Him both Lord and Christ. The fact that Christ is Lord of all means that the whole earth is the Lord's. The enthroned and glorified Christ is also the Head, the Forerunner and Pioneer, the High Priest, the heavenly Minister, and the Lamb on the throne of God's administration. From the throne in the heavens, the divine transmission brings the things above into the local churches.

Seeing a vision of the things which are above will revolutionize our daily living. It will cause us to turn our attention from the things on earth to the things in heaven—to the glorified and enthroned Jesus, to the heavenly High Priest, to the Head over all things to the church, to the One executing the divine government. Let us seek these things and set our mind on them.

Instead of caring for our own virtues, we should care for the Lord Jesus as the crowned One, the Head, Forerunner, High Priest, and Minister. We should care for the throne in heaven from which Christ, the Lamb with seven eyes, is executing God's administration through the local churches.

Christ is not idle. He is interceding, ministering, and executing God's administration. We on earth should respond to Christ's activities in heaven.

Between Christ in heaven and us on earth there is a divine transmission, a heavenly current. If we are receiving this transmission, we shall respond to Christ's work in heaven....We should continually respond to Christ's interceding, ministering, and executing of God's administration.

To seek the things above means that we correspond to Christ's heavenly ministry. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 514-515, 549-550)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 334; Life-study of Colossians, msg. 62

# « WEEK 1 — DAY 5 »

## Morning Nourishment

Rev. 4:1-2 After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show you the things that must take place after these things. Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting.

We must realize that today Christ is the eternal Spirit, the Holy One, who brings Himself into our spirit. God the Father deals with us in our spirit, so in order to contact God, experience Christ, and realize the Spirit, we must discern our spirit from our soul. This means that we must always turn to the spirit and experience the dividing of our spirit from our soul. When we turn to our spirit, we enter into the Holy of Holies. Then we have Christ as the presence of God. We can contact God in all His fullness and enjoy Christ as the tree of life in the flow of the living water (Rev. 22:1-2). The tree of life is Christ as our grace, and the flow of living water is the transmitting Spirit. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 3823)

## Today's Reading

By the transmission we experience in our spirit, we are connected to the heavenly power plant. Praise the Lord that a transmission is going on from heaven to our spirit! When we experience this transmission, we are truly in Christ, in the Father, and in heaven. Our spirit is directly related to heaven. The heavenly transmission begins in heaven and ends in our spirit. Because we may experience and enjoy this unique transmission, there is no need for us to go to heaven in order to be in heaven. Simply by being in our spirit where we experience the transmission from heaven, we are in heaven. Just as the lights in the meeting hall are connected to the power plant by the flow of electricity, so we are connected to heaven by the divine transmission which flows from the throne of God in heaven into our spirit.

When I was a young believer, I tried my best to understand, according to the Bible, how I could be in heaven. To my realization, I was on earth and was by no means in heaven, no matter how happy I may have been in the Lord. Now I realize that, because of the transmission from the throne of God in heaven into my spirit, when I enjoy the Lord here on earth, I am simultaneously in heaven.

We need to ask ourselves, then, whether we are in heaven or on earth. In answering this question we need to be careful. The proper way to answer is to say that when we are in spirit we are also in heaven, but when we are not in spirit we are on earth and, experientially, even under the earth. According to our experience, we know that in spirit we may be in heaven one minute and then, because we do not remain in our spirit, we may immediately plunge down to the earth. For example, during your time with the Lord in the morning, you may be in the heavenlies, having prayed yourself into the Spirit. But at the breakfast table your wife or husband may say something to bother you, and immediately you are drawn out of the spirit into the flesh. No longer are you in heaven; you are now on earth. This indicates that only when we are in spirit are we in heaven. Whenever we are outside the spirit, we are earthly.

In Colossians 3:1 Paul charges us to seek the things which are above. The way to seek these things is to turn to the spirit and call on the name of the Lord. Our experience tells us clearly that we touch the heavens by turning to our spirit, for our spirit is the receiving end of the divine transmission, whereas the throne of God in heaven is the transmitting end. Thus, by turning to our spirit, we are lifted into heaven. Then in our experience we are in Christ, in the Father, and in heaven. Then in the spirit we are one in position with Christ, seeking the things which are above. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 519-520)

Further Reading: The Economy of God, ch. 11; Our Human Spirit, chs. 8-10; The Spirit in the Epistles, ch. 10; Basic Principles of the Experience of Life, chs. 8-9

# « WEEK 1 — DAY 6 »

## Morning Nourishment

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

1 Cor. 2:15 But the spiritual man discerns all things, but he himself is discerned by no one.

First Thessalonians 5:23 shows that the soul and spirit are not the same but are two separate items. Hebrews 4:12 reveals that the spirit and soul can be divided just like the marrow can be divided from the joints....The marrow is hidden within the bones just like the spirit is hidden within the soul. The spirit is so hidden in the soul that it needs to be divided from the soul by the living and operative word of God, which is “sharper than any two-edged sword” (v. 12).

The soul and the spirit can be divided because they are two items, two entities, two kinds of substances. Regardless of how hidden the marrow is within the bone, still they are two things. Regardless of how hidden our spirit is within our soul, still they are two things, two organs, two items. We have to learn how to divide our soul from our spirit. (Our Human Spirit, p. 51)

## Today's Reading

There is a great difference between the soul and the spirit, and the soul can be divided and should be divided from the spirit. Moreover, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 shows us that unless the soul is subdued by the spirit and submissive to the spirit, the soul is against the spirit and contradicts the spirit....[In verse 14] soulish implies the meaning of “natural” or “psychological.” A soulish man is a natural man, a man living in the soul. The soul is absolutely impotent in spiritual matters.

In these two verses we can see two kinds of persons: the soulish man and the spiritual man. The soulish man, and the soul itself, cannot understand or receive the spiritual things and even considers the spiritual things foolish. The spiritual man, however, discerns the spiritual things and likes to receive the spiritual things. It is by the spirit that we understand and discern the spiritual things, and it is in the spirit that we desire to have the spiritual things. If we are soulish, we simply cannot understand the spiritual things, we do not like anything spiritual, and we even think that the spiritual things are foolish. Thus, the soul itself is a contradiction to the spirit. We can realize this by our experience. (Basic Principles of the Experience of Life, pp. 82-83)

To be spiritual is to have the two spirits mingled together in your being. To be spiritual is to have your spirit, the regenerated human spirit, mingled with the Spirit of God to become one spirit. Spiritual persons live in this mingled spirit. Whenever you are in the mingled spirit, you are spiritual, and you have spiritual discernment, spiritual knowledge, and spiritual communication. You are able to discern spiritually both the things of man and the things of God. (Life-study of 1 Corinthians, p. 164)

In Colossians 3:1 and 2 Paul tells us not only to seek the things which are above but also to set our mind on them. This means that we need to forget earthly things—culture, religion, philosophy, and the natural human virtues. Instead, let us lift up our eyes to the heavens and set our mind on the wonderful, excellent things, the things that are above. These are the things which can cause us to be transformed, for they transmit a heavenly element into us. Let us learn to open our spirit and our whole being to the heavens and keep the “switch” turned on so that the transmission from the divine power plant may flow into us unceasingly. Do not be distracted by religion, philosophy, or anything else. Focus your attention on the things above and stay open to the heavenly power plant. Then the riches of Christ's heavenly ministry will be transmitted into you, and you will be transformed and constituted of Christ. (Life-study of Colossians, pp. 515-516)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 37, ch. 25; vol. 54, “The Breaking of the Outer Man and the Release of the Spirit,” ch. 7; Life-study of 1 Corinthians, msgs. 17-21

# « WEEK 1 — HYMN

## Hymns, #500

1

Oh, what a might! Oh, what a strength!  
God wrought to raise Christ from the dead.  
Far above all at His right hand,  
O'er all to us He is the Head.  
All this great pow'r is to the Church  
That she o'er all her foes may tread.

2

Oh, what a fact! Oh, what a bliss!  
That I of Christ a member am.  
With all the saints I blend as one  
And share the life of the new man.  
Joined to our great ascended Head,  
We'll be the Church of His own plan.

3

Oh, what a breadth! Oh, what a length!  
The height, the depth unsearchable!  
Christ the Lord is unlimited,  
So vast, immense, immeas'urable.  
All that He is and all He has  
Is now our life unspeakable.  
(Repeat the last two lines of each stanza)

## WEEK 2 — OUTLINE

### **The Apostolic Ministry in Cooperation with Christ's Heavenly Ministry to Shepherd the Church of God as His Flock for the Building Up of the Body of Christ**

Scripture Reading: John 10:11, 16; 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Heb. 13:20; Rev. 1:13; 2:1, 7

#### « DAY 1 »

- I. Psalms 22 through 24 are a group of psalms revealing Christ from His crucifixion through His shepherding to His kingship in the coming age:
  - A. Psalm 23, which concerns Christ as the Shepherd in His resurrection and ascension, is the bridge between Christ's redeeming death and His church-producing resurrection in Psalm 22 and Christ's coming back as the King, who will regain the entire earth through the church as His Body in Psalm 24.
  - B. In His heavenly ministry Christ is shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people; if this fellowship is received by us, there will be a big revival on the earth to bring the Lord back.
- II. John 21 reveals the apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry; it is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John:
  - A. The Gospel of John has twenty-one chapters, but it actually ends with chapter 20.
  - B. The entire book covers the earthly ministry of Christ, beginning with His incarnation as the Word of God to become a man in the flesh (1:14) and ending with His resurrection as the last Adam to become the life-giving Spirit (20:22); hence, chapter 21 should be an appendix.
  - C. Although it is correct to say this, it is more intrinsic to say that John 21 is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John; it consummates the entire Gospel of John by showing that Christ's heavenly ministry and the apostles' ministry on the earth cooperate together to carry out God's economy.

#### « DAY 2 »

- III. In John 10:10-11 and 16 the Lord unveiled to the disciples that He was the good Shepherd who came that the sheep might have life abundantly and that He had other sheep (the Gentiles) which He must lead to join with them (the Jewish believers) to be one flock (one church) under one Shepherd:
  - A. The Lord's shepherding was firstly in His earthly ministry (Matt. 9:36; cf. 10:1-6).

B. The Lord's shepherding is secondly in His heavenly ministry (1 Pet. 5:4) to take care of the church of God, issuing in His Body.

#### IV. The Lord commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep:

A. When the Lord stayed with His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension, in one of His appearances, He commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep in His absence, while He is in the heavens (John 21:15-17).

B. This is to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock, which is the church that issues in the Body of Christ.

C. Later, in the book of Acts, Peter said, "We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word" (6:4); this is to cooperate with Christ's heavenly ministry of intercession (Heb. 7:25) and of ministering God into His people (8:2).

D. Peter was so impressed with this commission of the Lord that in his first book he told the believers that they were like sheep being led astray, but they had now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of their souls (1 Pet. 2:25):

1. Christ indwells us to be our life and everything, but He is also overseeing, observing, the condition and situation of our inner being.

2. He shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our soul, our real person (cf. Heb. 13:17).

E. Peter exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God among them so that when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, they, the faithful elders, will receive the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

F. Peter's word indicates that the heavenly ministry of Christ is mainly to shepherd the church of God as His flock, which issues in His Body.

### « DAY 3 »

#### V. The following words of the apostle Paul also show the incorporation of the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock:

A. In Acts 20:28 Paul told the elders in Ephesus, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained [or purchased] through His own blood."

B. Paul said, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (v. 29); the apostle did not care for his own life (v. 24), but he was very concerned for the future of the church, which was a treasure to him and to God.

C. Paul says in Hebrews 13:20, "God...brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant":



1.The eternal covenant is the covenant of the new testament to gain a flock, which is the church issuing in the Body and consummating the New Jerusalem; the eternal covenant of God is to consummate the New Jerusalem by the shepherding.

2.God raised up our Lord from the dead to be the great Shepherd to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God's eternal covenant.

VI. The main purpose and goal of the apostolic ministry incorporated with Christ's heavenly ministry are to build up the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God (cf. Eph. 3:2, 8-9; 1 Pet. 5:10).

VII. The matter of shepherding God's flock for the main purpose and ultimate consummation of the eternal economy of God is even referred to in Song of Songs:

A. "Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock [for satisfaction]? / Where do you make it lie down at noon [for rest]?" (1:7a).

B. "Go forth on the footsteps of the flock, / And pasture your young goats / By the shepherds' tents" (v. 8b).

C. "My beloved is mine, and I am his; / He pastures his flock among the lilies [the seekers of Christ who live a life of trusting in God with a single heart]" (2:16).

D. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; / He pastures his flock among the lilies" (6:3).

VIII. To shepherd the believers is very crucial for their growth in life; we must take the shepherding way to preach the gospel and revive the church:

A. We should pray, "Lord, I want to be revived; from today I want to be a shepherd; I want to go to feed people, to shepherd people, and to flock people together."

B. In John 10 and 21 the Lord used three words concerning shepherding: feed, shepherd, and flock (10:16; 21:15-16); we can also use the word flock as a verb.

C. All the churches have to learn how to flock together so that they can be blent together; the elders and co-workers should take the lead to practice this.

## « DAY 4 »

IX. The organic maintenance of the golden lampstand is Christ's heavenly ministry to cherish the churches in His humanity and nourish the churches in His divinity to produce the overcomers through His organic shepherding (Rev. 1:13; 2:7; John 10:11, 14; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Heb. 13:20):

A. The Son of Man is in His humanity, the golden girdle signifies His divinity, and breasts are a sign of love:



- 1.Christ was girded at the loins, strengthened for the divine work (Exo. 28:4; Dan. 10:5) to produce the churches, but now He is girded about at the breasts, caring for the churches that He has produced by His love (Rev. 1:13).
- 2.The golden girdle signifies Christ's divinity as His divine energy, and the breasts signify that this golden energy is exercised and motivated by and with His love to nourish the churches.

## « DAY 5 »

B.Christ takes care of the churches in His humanity as the Son of Man to cherish them (v. 13a):

- 1.He dresses the lamps of the lampstands to make them proper, cherishing us that we may be happy, pleasant, and comfortable (Exo. 30:7; cf. Psa. 42:5, 11):
  - a.The Lord's presence provides an atmosphere of tenderness and warmth to cherish our being, giving us rest, comfort, healing, cleansing, and encouragement.
  - b.We can enjoy the cherishing atmosphere of the Lord's presence in the church to receive the nourishing supply of life (Eph. 5:29; cf. 1 Tim. 4:6; Eph. 4:11).
- 2.He trims the wicks of the lamps of the lampstand, cutting off all the negative things, which frustrate our shining (Exo. 25:38):
  - a.The charred part of the wick, the snuff, signifies things that are not according to God's purpose, which need to be cut off, such as our flesh, our natural man, our self, and our old creation.
  - b.He trims away all the differences among the churches (the wrongdoings, shortages, failures, and defects) so that they may be the same in essence, appearance, and expression (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 12:18; Phil. 2:2).

C.Christ takes care of the churches in His divinity with His divine love, signified by the golden girdle on His breasts, to nourish the churches (Rev. 1:13b):

## « DAY 6 »

- 1.He nourishes us with Himself as the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages so that we may grow and mature in the divine life to be His overcomers to accomplish His eternal economy.
- 2.As the walking Christ, He gets to know the condition of each church, and as the speaking Spirit, He trims and fills the lampstands with fresh oil, the supply of the Spirit (2:1, 7; cf. Exo. 27:20-21; Zech. 4:6, 11-14).
- 3.To participate in His move and enjoy His care, we must be in the churches.

**X. Through Christ's wonderful shepherding, we will enjoy Him as our blessings both today and for eternity (Isa. 49:10; Rev. 7:9-17).**

# « WEEK 2 — DAY 1 »

## Morning Nourishment

Psa. 22:22 I will declare Your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

23:1 Jehovah is my Shepherd; I will lack nothing.

24:9-10 Lift up your heads, O gates; and lift up, O long enduring doors; and the King of glory will come in. Who is this King of glory? Jehovah of hosts—He is the King of glory! Selah

Psalms 22—24 are a group of psalms revealing Christ from His crucifixion to His kingship in the coming age. In Psalm 22 we see Christ's death, His resurrection, and His many brothers produced in His resurrection to form His church. Psalm 23 is concerning Christ as the Shepherd. This Shepherd today is in His resurrection. Psalm 24 is concerning Christ as the coming King in God's kingdom. Thus, in these three psalms, we have Christ crucified, Christ resurrected, Christ producing the church, Christ being the Shepherd and shepherding His flock, the church, and Christ coming back to be the King. (Life-study of the Psalms, p. 137)

## Today's Reading

According to Psalm 23, Christ shepherds us in five stages: (1) the enjoyment of Christ as the green pastures and of the Spirit as the waters of rest (v. 2); (2) the revival and transformation on the paths of righteousness (v. 3); (3) the experience of the resurrected pneumatic Christ while walking through the valley of the shadow of death (v. 4); (4) the deeper and higher enjoyment of the resurrected Christ in fighting against the adversaries (v. 5); and (5) the lifelong enjoyment of the divine goodness and kindness in the house of Jehovah (v. 6). (Psa. 23:1, footnote 1)

By being incarnated, crucified, and resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), Christ as Jehovah (John 8:24), the Triune God (Exo. 3:14), is qualified to be our Shepherd. By His redeeming, washing, resurrecting, and regenerating us, we are qualified to be His flock. To enjoy Christ's shepherding, we need to be in the flock, that is, in the church. (Psa. 23:1, footnote 2)

If all the churches receive this teaching to participate in Christ's wonderful shepherding, there will be a big revival in the recovery....Shepherding and teaching should be like two feet for our move with the Lord. Our shepherding should always be with teaching, and our teaching should always be with shepherding.

John 21 reveals the apostolic ministry in cooperation with Christ's heavenly ministry. In His heavenly ministry Christ is shepherding people, and we need to cooperate with Him by shepherding people. Without shepherding, our work for the Lord cannot be effective. We must learn all the truths so that we may have something to speak and go to contact people to shepherd them.

Shepherding is something divine. In order to be a shepherd, we must be a witness of Christ, a member of Christ, and a brother of Christ, sharing His sonship. Then we will participate in the oracle of the sonship to become a prophet. As a prophet for God's oracle, we will speak for the Lord. Meanwhile, we need to shepherd people. This is the way to be fruitful, to have the multiplication and the increase. If this kind of fellowship is received by us, I believe there will be a big revival on the earth, not by a few spiritual giants but by the many members of Christ's Body being shepherds who follow the steps of the processed Triune God in seeking and gaining fallen people. (The Vital Groups, p. 40)

The entire Gospel of John covers the earthly ministry of Christ, beginning with His incarnation as the Word of God to become a man in the flesh (1:1-14) and ending with His resurrection as the last Adam to become the life-giving Spirit (ch. 20); hence, chapter 21 should be an appendix. Although it is correct to say this, it is more intrinsic to say that John 21 is the completion and consummation of the Gospel of John. Without chapter 21, John is not completed. It consummates the entire Gospel of John by showing that Christ's heavenly ministry and the apostles' ministry on the earth cooperate together to carry out God's New Testament economy. (Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, p. 130)

Further Reading: The Vital Groups, msg. 4

## « WEEK 2 — DAY 2 »

### Morning Nourishment

John 10:10-11 The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly. I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

21:16 He said to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You. He said to him, Shepherd My sheep.

In John 10:10, 11, and 16 the Lord unveiled to the disciples that He was the good Shepherd who came that the sheep might have life abundantly and that He had other sheep (the Gentiles) which He must lead to join with them (the Jewish believers) to be one flock (one church) under one Shepherd.

The Lord's shepherding was firstly in His earthly ministry (Matt. 9:36). The Lord saw the Israelites as sheep harassed by their leaders; they were cast away like sheep not having a shepherd. The Lord as the Shepherd of God's elect prayed, and God told His sent One to appoint twelve apostles that they might take care of the sheep of God (Matt. 10:1-6).

The Lord's shepherding is secondly in His heavenly ministry (1 Pet. 5:4) to take care of the church of God, issuing in His Body. When He was on the earth, He was shepherding. After His resurrection and ascension to the heavens, He is still shepherding. (Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, pp. 130-131)

### Today's Reading

When the Lord stayed with His disciples after His resurrection and before His ascension, in one of His appearances, He commissioned Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep in His absence, while He is in the heavens (John 21:15-17). Shepherding implies feeding, but it includes much more than feeding. To shepherd is to take all-inclusive tender care of the flock.

This is to incorporate the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock, which is the church that issues in the Body of Christ.

Peter was so impressed with this commission of the Lord that in his first book he told the believers that they were like sheep being led astray, but they had now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer (Christ) of their souls (1 Pet. 2:25). Christ's shepherding of His flock includes His caring for their outward things and also their inner being, their souls. He takes care of the things concerning their souls by overseeing their souls. Christ indwells us to be our life and everything, but He is also overseeing, observing, the condition and situation of our inner being. He shepherds us by caring for the welfare of our inner being and by exercising His oversight over the condition of our soul, our real person....Peter exhorted the elders to shepherd the flock of God among them so that when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, they, the faithful elders, will receive the unfading crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:1-4)....Peter's word indicates that the heavenly ministry of Christ is mainly to shepherd the church of God as His flock, which issues in His Body.

The main purpose and goal of the apostolic ministry incorporated with Christ's heavenly ministry are to build up the Body of Christ, which will consummate the New Jerusalem for the accomplishment of the eternal economy of God.

In view of the eternal economy of God, there is the tendency through the whole writing of John to have the church of God issuing in the Body of Christ for the accomplishment of God's eternal economy. Its judicial section qualifies and positions the believers to carry out its organic section by the divine life of the processed and consummated Triune God. But today most Christians are just lingering in its judicial section and are satisfied with it, paying very little attention to its organic section and missing the critical point of the fulfillment of the eternal economy of God. The critical need of the Lord's recovery today is not to be held back by the satisfaction of its judicial section but to press forward to carry out its organic section so that there may be the possibility of accomplishing the eternal economy of God. (Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, pp. 131-133, 137)

Further Reading: Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, msg. 13

## ◀ WEEK 2 — DAY 3 ▶

### Morning Nourishment

Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.

Heb. 13:20 Now the God of peace, He who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant.

The following words of the apostle Paul confirm [the incorporation of the apostolic ministry with Christ's heavenly ministry to take care of God's flock]....In Acts 20:28 Paul told the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God...." Although Paul was on an urgent trip back to Jerusalem, while he was journeying he sent word for the elders in Ephesus to come to him. Then he gave them a long word recorded in Acts 20....Paul said that "fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock" (v. 29). The flock is the church. (Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, pp. 131-132)

### Today's Reading

Paul said in Hebrews 13:20, "God...brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of an eternal covenant." The eternal covenant is the covenant of the new testament to gain a flock, which is the church issuing in the Body and consummating the New Jerusalem. The eternal covenant of God is to consummate the New Jerusalem by the shepherding. God raised up our Lord from the dead to be the great Shepherd to consummate the New Jerusalem according to God's eternal covenant.

This matter of shepherding God's flock for the main purpose and ultimate consummation of the eternal economy of God is even referred to in Song of Songs. In this book Christ shepherds His seeker and pursuer.

In Song of Songs 1:7a the seeker says, "Tell me, you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock [for satisfaction]? / Where do you make it lie down at noon [for rest]?"

The Shepherd responds to the seeker by saying, "Go forth on the footsteps of the flock, / And pasture your young goats / By the shepherds' tents" (1:8b). Under the Lord as the Chief Shepherd there are many other shepherds. The many shepherds pasture their young by their tents, that is, where they live.

Song of Songs 2:16 says, "My beloved is mine, and I am his; / He pastures his flock among the lilies [the seekers of Christ who live a life of trusting in God with a single heart]." The Lord is pasturing all His seekers as lilies, taking care of them, feeding them, and shepherding them that they may grow.

Song of Songs 6:3 says, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; / He pastures his flock among the lilies." To shepherd the believers is very crucial for their growth in life.

I hope that we would pray, "Lord, I want to be revived. From today I want to be a shepherd. I want to go to feed people, to shepherd people, and to flock people together." In John 10 and 21 the Lord used three words concerning shepherding: feed, shepherd, and flock. He said, "Feed My lambs," and, "Shepherd My sheep" (21:15-16). He also said, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must lead them also, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, one Shepherd" (10:16). The other sheep are the Gentile believers who would be joined together with the Jewish believers to be one flock. The Lord used the word flock here as a noun. I also like to use it as a verb. We should learn to feed, to shepherd, and to flock together. All the churches have to learn how to flock together so that they can be blent together. In the atmosphere of flocking, people are subdued, convinced, nourished, and stirred up by the Lord. All the nearby churches should be flocked together for the saints to be shepherded and stirred up. The elders and co-workers should take the lead to practice this. (Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, pp. 132-134, 137)

Further Reading: Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John, msg. 13

## « WEEK 2 — DAY 4 »

### Morning Nourishment

Rev. 1:12-13 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle.

Christ today is in the midst of the churches. On one hand, as the High Priest, He is interceding in the heavens for the churches (Heb. 9:24; 7:25-26; Rom. 8:34), and on the other hand, He is walking in the midst of the churches to care for them. To participate in His move and enjoy His care, we must be in the churches. (Rev. 1:13, footnote 1)

Christ as the Son of Man is not only for the accomplishing of redemption but also for the church life, because the church is composed of human beings....His dealings here with the churches are based on His humanity. In His humanity He was altogether victorious and successful in bearing the testimony of God. The churches also, being in humanity, surely can be victorious and successful in bearing the testimony of God. (Rev. 1:13, footnote 2)

### Today's Reading

Christ is the best model of cherishing and nourishing as seen in Revelation 1....Verses 12 and 13...[show] that Christ is taking care of the lampstands by being the Son of Man with a long garment. This garment is the priestly robe (Exo. 28:33-35), which shows that Christ is our great High Priest.

He is also girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle. This girdle is a long piece of gold. The girdle and the gold are not two separate things. The girdle is the gold. The golden girdle is one piece of gold to become a belt. The Son of Man is in His humanity, and the golden girdle signifies His divinity. This golden girdle is on His breasts, and the breasts are a sign of love.

The priests in the Old Testament were girded at the loins for their ministry (Exo. 28:4). In Daniel 10:5 Christ also is girded at His loins, with fine gold. To be girded at the loins is to be strengthened for the work. Christ has finished His divine work in producing the churches. Now by His love He is caring for the churches which He has produced. This is why He is girded at the breasts. Today Christ is our High Priest taking care of His churches established by His labor. But now He takes care of the churches with the girdle not on His loins but on His breasts, signifying love. I hope we all could realize that in these days even among us, Christ is wearing a golden girdle on His breasts.

The golden girdle is a sign, signifying Christ's divinity becoming His energy. Christ's energy is totally His divinity. A piece of gold is now a girdle. The totality of Christ in His divinity has become a girdle. The golden girdle signifies Christ's divinity becoming His energy, and the breasts signify that this golden energy is exercised and motivated by His love. His divine energy is exercised by and with His love to nourish the churches. (The Vital Groups, pp. 105-106)

The churches, signified by the seven golden lampstands, are the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:2, 9) in the divine nature, shining in the dark night locally yet collectively. The churches should be of the divine nature—golden. They should be the stands, even the lampstands, that bear the lamp with the oil (Christ as the life-giving Spirit) and shine in the darkness individually and collectively. They are individual lampstands locally, yet at the same time they are a group, a collection, of lampstands universally. They not only are shining locally but also are bearing universally the same testimony both to the localities and to the universe. They are of the same nature and in the same shape. They bear the same lamp for the same purpose and are fully identified with one another, not having any individual distinctiveness. The differences among the seven churches recorded in Revelation 2 and 3 are all of a negative nature, not a positive one. Negatively, in their failures, the churches are different and separate from one another; but positively, in their nature, shape, and purpose, they are absolutely identical and are connected to one another. (Rev. 1:20, footnote 1)

Further Reading: The Vital Groups, msg. 11



## « WEEK 2 — DAY 5 »

### Morning Nourishment

Exo. 25:37 And you shall make its lamps, seven; and set up its lamps to give light to the area in front of it.

27:21 In the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall maintain it [the lampstand] in order from evening to morning before Jehovah...

30:7-8 ...Every morning when he dresses the lamps....And when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight...

Christ takes care of the churches as the lampstands in His humanity as “the Son of Man” to cherish them (Rev. 1:13a). Christ as our High Priest takes care of the churches He has established first in His humanity to cherish the churches, to make the churches happy, pleasant, and comfortable.

He does this by dressing the lamps of the lampstand. The high priest in the Old Testament dressed the lamps of the lampstands every morning (Exo. 30:7). To dress the lamps is to make them proper. (The Vital Groups, p. 106)

### Today's Reading

Christ cares for the lampstands by trimming the wicks of the lamps of the lampstand, just as the priest did according to the type in the Old Testament (Exo. 25:38). When the wick was burned out, it became charred and black, so the priest had to come to cut off the black part of the wick....The charred part of the wick, the snuff, signifies things that are not according to God's purpose which need to be cut off, such as our flesh, our natural man, our self, and our old creation. All the lampstands are organic. They are living lampstands. Since each church is a living lampstand, each church has much feeling. A church with charred wicks will not feel comfortable.

Our Christ is the same as we are. He has been tempted in everything like us, so He can easily be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses [Heb 4:15]. This means that He always sympathizes with our weaknesses in His humanity. He is the High Priest in His humanity taking care of us by cherishing us all the time.

Christ, as the High Priest, takes care of the churches as the lampstands in His divinity with His divine love, signified by the golden girdle on His breasts, to nourish the churches (Rev. 1:13b). Christ is not only human but also divine....His divinity as the divine energy nourishes the churches in many ways.

Revelation 2 and 3 reveal Christ's care for the lampstands. On the one hand, He trims the wicks of the church lamps, cutting away all the wrongdoings, shortages, failures, and defects mentioned in the seven epistles to the seven churches. Christ did the best trimming work in His humanity to cherish the churches. On the other hand, in each of these seven epistles, we see Christ's nourishing. (The Vital Groups, pp. 106-107)

In the Old Testament there was the lampstand in the tabernacle. Every morning these lamps were trimmed by having their charred wicks snuffed (Exo. 30:7). In addition, they were kept supplied with oil (27:20). To trim is to cut off the charred ends, which would no longer burn brightly; to add oil is to supply what is needed. In Revelation 2 and 3 our High Priest was trimming the seven lampstands. He was cutting away those things that were not needed and that frustrated the shining. At the same time He was supplying the oil that was needed and that would make the lampstands burn brightly. The seven lampstands were receiving His trimming and His infilling.

Our old religious concepts are against God's economy and need to be trimmed away. These concepts are black, charred, and dark. They are one of the things that hinder the shining of the local churches. Thus, we need our High Priest to step in and trim them away.

Lukewarmness must be trimmed away, along with religion, worldliness, and the evils of Jezebel. Morning by morning the priests did this trimming work. (CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, “The Mending Ministry of John,” pp. 356-357, 359)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, “The Mending Ministry of John,” ch. 14

## « WEEK 2 — DAY 6 »

### Morning Nourishment

Rev. 2:1 ...These things says...He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...

Isa. 49:10 They will not hunger or thirst; neither the scorching heat nor the sun will strike them; for He who has compassion on them will lead them and will guide them beside the springs of water.

In the first epistle to the church at Ephesus, Christ says, “To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7)....If we do not enjoy Christ as the tree of life in the church life today, surely we will not participate in the tree of life in the kingdom age....If I do not eat Christ here today, I will not eat Him in the kingdom age. I have to eat here first.

In the seventh epistle...He promised to dine with the ones who would open the door to Him (3:20). We can see that this is the nourishing of Christ in His divinity exercised by and with His love.

He is also the High Priest with His divinity as the “energy belt” to nourish us with Himself as the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages....His nourishing the churches in His divinity is so that the churches may grow and mature in His divine life and become the overcomers in His sevenfold intensification. (The Vital Groups, pp. 107-109)

### Today's Reading

Our Christ today is our High Priest. In His humanity He is easily touched with the feeling of our weaknesses. He sympathizes with our weakness because He was tempted in all respects like us. He is cherishing us in His humanity. Meanwhile, He is nourishing us in His divinity with all the positive aspects of His person revealed in the seven epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. He is taking care of the churches in the recovery in both ways. In His humanity He is cherishing us to make us proper so that we may be happy, pleasant, and comfortable. In His divinity He is nourishing us so that we may grow and mature in the divine life to be His overcomers to accomplish His eternal economy. (The Vital Groups, p. 109)

The outcome of our High Priest's ministering in the churches is that a number of overcomers are brought forth....We are now under this ministry. Christ is busy walking through the churches and speaking. As He walks through the churches, He speaks to everyone.

His speaking is according to what He is and also according to the condition of the church. In every epistle He begins by saying who and what He is. Then He also speaks in every case according to what the church is. His speaking is both practical and equipping.

In His walking He is Christ. In His speaking He is the Spirit. At the beginning of each of the seven epistles it is the Lord who speaks (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). At the end it is the Spirit speaking to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Your experience will confirm this. When Christ came and walked through the church in your locality, you were enlightened and rebuked. The walking Christ became the speaking Spirit. Christ is the Spirit. By His speaking you are supplied with the tree of life and the hidden manna. Then you are transformed. Little by little the muddy things are washed away, and you become a white stone, justified, accepted, and approved by God for the building up of His dwelling place, which consummates in the New Jerusalem. Christ today is busy ministering His heavenly priesthood. (CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, “The Mending Ministry of John,” pp. 353-354)

We can never improve ourselves. We need a Shepherd to feed us all the time. What a restful enjoyment this is!

If we believe in God's word, we can be satisfied, and we can have God's sheltering and the Lord's shepherding [Isa. 49:10]. God has promised that we can enjoy these three items of blessings today. (CWWN, vol. 37, pp. 10-11)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, “The Mending Ministry of John,” ch. 13; CWWN, vol. 37, ch. 2



## « WEEK 2 — HYMN

### Hymns, #1221

1

Jesus, our wonderful Shepherd  
Brought us right out of the fold  
Into His pasture so plenteous,  
Into His riches untold.  
Glorious church life,  
Feasting from such a rich store!  
Here where we're dwelling in oneness  
God commands life evermore.

2

In the divisions He sought us,  
Weary and famished for food;  
Into the good land He brought us,  
Oh, to our spirit how good!

3

Jesus Himself is our pasture,  
He is the food that we eat;  
We as His sheep are fed richly  
Each time, whenever we meet.

4

Dwell we here on a high mountain,  
Wet with the morning-fresh dew,  
Slaking our thirst at the fountain,  
Water so living and new.

5

Christ is our rest and enjoyment,  
Here we have nothing to fear;  
Here all the sheep dwell securely,  
Kept by His presence so dear.

## WEEK 3 — OUTLINE

### **The Pattern of the Apostle Paul in Cooperating with Christ's Heavenly Ministry to Shepherd People for the Building Up of the Body of Christ**

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:17-20, 28, 31; 26:16-19; 2 Cor. 11:28-29; 12:15; 1 Thes. 2:1-12

#### « DAY 1 »

- I. Paul was a pattern of cooperating with Christ's heavenly ministry to shepherd people for the building up of the Body of Christ (Heb. 13:20; John 10:11, 14-15; 1 Pet. 2:25; 5:4; Acts 20:17-20, 28, 31; 26:16-19; 2 Cor. 11:28-29; 12:15; Eph. 4:11-12, 15-16).
- II. The apostles were a pattern of the glad tidings that they spread—"you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake" (1 Thes. 1:5b):
  - A. In the church the most important thing is the person; the person is the way, and the person is the Lord's work; what you are is what you do (John 5:19; 6:57; Phil. 1:19-26; Acts 20:18-35; Matt. 7:17-18; 12:33-37).
  - B. We need to follow the pattern of the apostles to pay more attention to life than to work (John 12:24; 2 Cor. 4:12).

#### « DAY 2 »

- III. Paul was a pattern to the believers of living and ministering Christ as the Spirit in his spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ (1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12; Rom. 8:16):
  - A. The Lord appeared to Paul to make him a minister and a witness of the things in which Paul had seen Him and of the things in which He would appear to Paul (Acts 26:16-19; cf. 1:8; 23:11; 20:20, 31).
  - B. Paul took Christ as everything—as his living, pattern, goal, and secret (Phil. 1:19-21a; 2:5-16; 3:7-14; 4:11-13).
  - C. Paul lived by the Spirit, walked by the Spirit, sowed unto the Spirit, and ministered the Spirit as a spiritual man who lived and served in his spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25; 6:8; 2 Cor. 3:6; 1 Cor. 2:15; 2 Cor. 2:13; Rom. 1:9; 8:16).
  - D. Paul was infused with God to shine forth God in the ministry of the new covenant, which is the ministry of the Spirit, the ministry of righteousness, and the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:1; 3:6, 8-9; 5:18-20).
  - E. Paul lived and did everything in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:1-6, 15-16; Col. 2:19).

## « DAY 3 »

IV. The best way to shepherd people, to cherish and nourish them, is to give them a proper pattern; Paul fed his spiritual children with his own living of Christ (1 Thes. 2:1-12; 2 Cor. 1:23—2:14; 11:28-29; 1 Cor. 9:22; Acts 20:28):

- A. The apostles not only preached the gospel but also lived it; their ministering of the gospel was not only by word but also by a life that displayed the power of God, a life in the Holy Spirit and in the assurance of faith (1 Thes. 1:5).
- B. The saints in Thessalonica became imitators of the apostles; this led them to follow the Lord, to take Him as their pattern, thus making them a pattern to all other believers (vv. 6-7).
- C. The apostle Paul stressed repeatedly the apostles' entrance toward the believers; this shows that their manner of life played a great role in infusing the gospel into the new converts (vv. 5, 9; 2:1):

## « DAY 4 »

- 1. The apostles were struggling and speaking the gospel to the Thessalonians in the boldness of God (v. 2).
- 2. The apostles were free from deception, uncleanness, and guile (v. 3).
- 3. The apostles were first tested and approved by God and then were entrusted by Him with the gospel; hence, their speaking, the preaching of the gospel, was not of themselves to please men but of God to please Him; God proved, examined, and tested their hearts continually (v. 4; Psalms 26:2; 139:23-24; 2 Cor. 1:12; 6:6; 7:3).
- 4. The apostles were never found with flattering speech or with a pretext for covetousness (1 Thes. 2:5):
  - a. To have any pretext for covetousness is to peddle or adulterate the word of God (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2).
  - b. It is also to pretend to be godly for the sake of gain (1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:3).
- 5. The apostles did not seek glory from men (1 Thes. 2:6a):
  - a. To seek glory from men is a real temptation to every Christian worker; many have been devoured and spoiled by this matter (cf. 1 Sam. 15:12).
  - b. Lucifer became God's adversary, Satan, because of glory-seeking; anyone who seeks glory from men is a follower of Satan (Ezek. 28:13-17; Isa. 14:12-15; Matt. 4:8-10).
  - c. How much we will be used by the Lord and how long our usefulness will last depend on whether we seek glory from men (cf. John 7:17-18; 5:39-44; 12:43; 2 Cor. 4:5).

## « DAY 5 »

6. The apostles did not stand on their authority or dignity as apostles of Christ (1 Thes. 2:6b):
- a. To assert authority, dignity, or right in Christian work damages that work; the Lord Jesus, while on earth, gave up His dignity (John 13:4-5), and the apostle Paul preferred not to use his right (1 Cor. 9:12).
  - b. If we follow this pattern, we shall kill a deadly disease germ in the Body of Christ, the germ of assuming a position (Matt. 20:20-28).
7. The apostles cherished the believers and yearned over them as a nursing mother would cherish and yearn over her own children (1 Thes. 2:7-8; cf. Gal. 4:19; Isa. 49:14-15; 66:12-13):
- a. To cherish people is to make them happy, to comfort them, to make them feel that you are pleasant to them, easy to be contacted in everything and in every way.
  - b. To cherish people in our natural humanity is not genuine; we must cherish people with the Lord's presence as the charming factor, as the reality of resurrection.
  - c. Cherishing includes nourishing; to nourish people is to feed them with the all-inclusive Christ in His full ministry of three stages (Eph. 5:29).

## « DAY 6 »

8. The apostles not only imparted the gospel of God to the Thessalonians; they also imparted their own souls (1 Thes. 2:8):
- a. To live a clean and upright life (vv. 3-6, 10) and to love the new converts, even by giving our own souls to them (vv. 7-9, 11), are the prerequisites for infusing them with the gospel.
  - b. Paul was willing to spend not only what he had but also himself, his very being, on behalf of the saints (2 Cor. 12:15).
9. The apostles considered themselves as fathers in exhorting the believers to walk worthily of God, to have a walk that will enable them to enter into the kingdom of God and usher them into the glory of God (1 Thes. 2:11-12):
- a. As worshippers of idols (1:9), the believers were in the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:26).
  - b. Now, through the salvation in Christ they were called, and they have believed into the kingdom of God, which is the sphere in which they can worship and enjoy God under the divine ruling with the view of entering into God's glory.

# « WEEK 3 — DAY 1 »

## Morning Nourishment

Phil. 3:17 Be imitators together of me, brothers, and observe those who thus walk even as you have us as a pattern.

2 Thes. 3:9 Not because we do not have the right, but in order that we might give ourselves to you as a pattern that you might imitate us.

The service of the elders has to do with the person of the elder. It does not depend on the method but on the person. In the New Testament it is very difficult to find out what is the method or way to serve. Some places seem to speak about the method or the way, but actually the emphasis is still the person himself. The person is the way, and the person is the Lord's work. (Messages Given during the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, vol. 1, p. 59)

## Today's Reading

If God does not gain a person, He will have no work, and He will have no way. A way is a course that a person takes. If God does not gain man, He will have no course to take. Man thinks that the most important thing to do is to find a good way. However, God's work does not involve giving us the ways but is a matter of gaining the persons. If God can gain two or three brothers here, He will have a way. Even if I present to you the best way to be an elder, it will be useless if the person is wrong. We, the person, should be gained by God. We have to learn to be the proper person more than to learn to do the proper things. It is meaningless for things to be done properly without the person being a proper one. What you are is what you do. You cannot serve God beyond what you are as a person. Hudson Taylor said in his book *Union and Communion* that what we are is more important than what we do. This word left a deep impression on me. We should know how to help the brothers and sisters properly.

What God cares for is whether or not you have been touched by Him. The measure we yield ourselves to the Lord determines the measure we are able to serve Him. If you have been dealt with in your temper, you can help others with their temper. If you have been dealt with in the way you dress, you will be able to help others in the way they dress. The church is not a worldly society. The church is a body (Eph. 1:23). A body is a matter of life...Life can meet man's present need. This should cause every servant of God to come before God again. (Messages Given during the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, vol. 1, pp. 59-60)

Margaret Barber was a great example to Watchman Nee in the one matter of paying more attention to life than to work. He realized that God cares for what we are more than what we do, and his work was according to this principle.

Watchman Nee...always took pains to restrict himself in the function of his gifts and the use of his knowledge in order to insure that his work was fully in life, of life, with life, and was life itself. As long as he had the assurance that his ministry was the outflow of life, he was satisfied.

After he had been in his ministry for over six years, the number of saints in the Lord's recovery at that time was still so small. However, he was not disappointed; rather, he was strongly encouraged because he realized that that small number was the issue of his ministry. Praise the Lord! Because Watchman Nee was not interested in the outward work, the life-issue of his ministry has flowed throughout the whole earth. That part of his ministry which has flooded today's Christianity through his books was not his work but rather the very life that issued from his work. To him work did not mean much; life meant everything. In my whole life, he is the only person I have known who paid more attention to life than to work. (Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, pp. 85, 87)

Further Reading: Messages Given during the Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry, vol. 1, chs. 10, 33; Watchman Nee—a Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age, ch. 11

## « WEEK 3 — DAY 2 »

### Morning Nourishment

2 Cor. 12:14-15 ...For the children ought not to store up for the parents, but the parents for the children. But I, I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent on behalf of your souls...

Eph. 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

Paul took Christ as his life and lived by Christ. This Christ, who lived in him as life and who has the law of life and is the very law of life (Rom. 8:2), ruled and regulated him that he might be legitimately, legally, rightfully, and duly subject to Christ. Therefore, Paul was within a higher and better law, being subject to the law of life. (1 Cor. 9:21, footnote 2)

[In Philippians 3:16, the Greek word] stoicheo, meaning “to walk orderly,” [is] derived from steicho, which means “to range in regular line, to march in military rank, to keep step, to conform to virtue and piety.”...It is different from the word walk in verses 17 and 18, which means “to live, to deport oneself, to be occupied with, to walk about.”...By this word the apostle charged us to walk and to order our lives—whereunto we have attained, at the state to which we have attained—by the same rule, in the same line, in the same path, in the same footsteps. Whatever state we have attained to in our spiritual life, we all must walk, as the apostle did, by the same rule, in the same path; that is, we must pursue Christ toward the goal that we may gain Christ to the fullest extent as the prize of the upward calling of God. (Phil. 3:16, footnote 4)

### Today's Reading

[Paul's word in 2 Timothy 4:1] proves that, in his life and work, Paul took the Lord's appearing and His kingdom as the incentive and goal. The Lord's appearing will be for judgment, to reward each one of us (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12), and His kingdom will be for His reigning with His overcomers (Rev. 20:4, 6). The apostle not only took these two matters as the incentive and goal for himself but also by these two matters charged Timothy, who was under his leading, to faithfully fulfill his ministry of the word. (2 Tim. 4:1, footnote 2)

We need to contact and take care of others, sinners and believers, as the apostle Paul, the top apostle, did in contacting people and taking care of people's need (2 Cor. 1:23—2:14). In 2 Corinthians 11:28-29 Paul said, “Apart from the things which have not been mentioned, there is this: the crowd of cares pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?” This unveils the care of a proper shepherd.

Our attitude may be that everyone is weak but we are not weak. We may have the feeling that we are strong ones. In 1 Corinthians 9:22 Paul said, “To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak.” This means that we should come down to the weak one's level. To a sick person we come down to the level of a sick person. This is the way to shepherd people by visiting them. Paul also said, “Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn?” [2 Cor. 11:29]. This is to burn in sorrow and indignation over the cause of the stumbling of all the fallen ones. This shows the pattern of Paul as a good shepherd, taking care of God's flock.

Acts 20 says that while Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, he sent word to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. He told them that they should shepherd God's flock, which God purchased with His own blood (v. 28). The shepherding of God's flock was on Paul's heart. Many think that Paul was a great apostle doing a great work as a great career. But Paul considered what he did as shepherding the flock of God. We have to be revolutionized in our logic and consideration. We should not think that we are going to do a great work for Christ like certain spiritual giants. These so-called giants actually did not accomplish much for God's interest. Instead, they only made a name for themselves with little result for the building up of the Body of Christ. (The Vital Groups, pp. 61-62)

Further Reading: The Vital Groups, msg. 7



## « WEEK 3 — DAY 3 »

### Morning Nourishment

1 Thes. 1:5-7 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, even as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became a pattern to all those who believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.

The apostles not only preached the gospel; they lived it. Their ministering of the gospel was not only by word but also by a life that displayed the power of God, a life in the Holy Spirit and in the assurance of their faith. (1 Thes. 1:5, footnote 1)

The imitators of the apostles (1 Thes. 1:6) became a pattern to all other believers. (1 Thes. 1:7, footnote 1)

### Today's Reading

First Thessalonians 2:1-12 shows us how we should conduct ourselves as a pattern for new believers. In order to be a proper pattern, we need to be pure in our motives, especially concerning money. Much of what is written in these verses is related to money, greed, and covetousness. If we are not pure concerning money, if we are not sincere, honest, and faithful regarding it, we may be among those who adulterate the word of God and peddle it. Furthermore, this motive may cause us to use flattery and to have a pretext for covetousness. All these are serious matters. Therefore, if we would be a proper pattern for young saints, our greed must be dealt with, and money matters must be under our feet. We should never speak words of flattery, we should never have any pretext, and we should never seek glory for ourselves. Moreover, instead of trying to please man, we should do our best to please God. Then other believers will have a good pattern to follow.

To give the new believers and young ones a lot of teaching is not the proper way to take care of them. The proper way to foster them is to show them a pattern. By showing them a pattern you water them, supply them, nourish them, and cherish them. This is fostering. If you find that your experience is somewhat lacking, point the new believers to different people in the Bible, for example, to ones such as Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and David in the Old Testament and Peter, John, Paul, and Timothy in the New Testament. We can present the lives of Bible characters in such a way as to foster the growth of the young ones.

If we give too much teaching to new ones and young ones, we shall damage them. Every mother knows that one of the most important matters in the raising of children is proper feeding. Caring for children is ninety percent a matter of feeding and ten percent a matter of teaching. This also should be our practice in caring for new believers in the church....Feeding involves the presenting of patterns either from the Bible or from church history. By reading the biographies of saints throughout the ages, we nourish ourselves and experience a kind of fostering. The point here is that the best way to feed others and foster them is to give them a proper pattern....Only by having a pattern can we feed others.

In the book of 1 Thessalonians Paul was not preaching himself. Rather, he was feeding his spiritual children with his own living of Christ. This means that Paul's way of living was used to feed his spiritual children. This was the reason he emphasized his coming to the Thessalonians, his preaching, his way of handling the word of God, and his manner of living.

The apostle stresses repeatedly their entrance to the believers (1:5, 9). This shows that their manner of life played a great role in infusing the gospel into the new converts. It was not only what the apostles said but also what they were....They were a pattern of how to believe in the Lord and follow Him. Because many came to believe in the Lord Jesus through the apostles, a church was raised up in less than a month. This happened not mainly as a result of preaching and teaching but through the kind of entrance the apostles had among the Thessalonians. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 104-105, 110, 97)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, msg. 13



## « WEEK 3 — DAY 4 »

### Morning Nourishment

1 Thes. 2:2-4 ...We were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much struggle. For our exhortation is not out of deception nor out of uncleanness nor in guile; but even as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who proves our hearts.

In the preaching of the gospel, the apostles experienced God. They enjoyed Him as their boldness in the struggle for the gospel. They were bold not in themselves, but in God, even after they had been outrageously treated by the Philippians. **Suffering and persecution could not defeat them because they were in the organic union with the Triune God.** According to 1 Thessalonians 2:2, they spoke the gospel of God in much struggle. This indicates that while they were preaching, they were fighting, because persecution was still going on. Hence, they were struggling and speaking the gospel to the Thessalonians in the boldness of God. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, p. 97)

### Today's Reading

[In 1 Thessalonians 2:3] deception refers to the goal, uncleanness to the motive, and guile to the means. All three are of and by the subtle and deceiving devil. The word exhortation includes speaking, preaching, teaching, instructing, and exhorting. Paul's exhorting was free from deception, uncleanness, and guile. The apostles were **not greedy, and they had no intention of making a gain of anyone. Their coming to the Thessalonians with the gospel was altogether honest and faithful.**

Verse 4 says, "But even as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who proves our hearts." God's entrusting depends on His approval by His testing. The apostles were first tested and approved by God and then were entrusted by Him with the gospel. Hence, their speaking, the preaching of the gospel, was not of themselves to please men, but was of God to please Him. He proves, examines, and tests their hearts all the time (Psa. 26:2; 139:23-24).

First Thessalonians 2:5 says, "For neither were we found at any time with flattering speech, even as you know, nor with a pretext for covetousness; God is witness." The Greek word rendered "pretext" also means "pretense, cloak." To have any pretext for covetousness is to peddle or adulterate the word of God (2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2). It is also to pretend to be godly for gain (1 Tim. 6:5; Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:3).

In 1 Thessalonians 2:6 Paul goes on to say, "Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ." To seek glory of men is a real temptation to every Christian worker.

The Greek words rendered "stood on our authority" also mean "asserted authority." A literal translation would be "been able to be in weight," that is, been burdensome (see v. 9; 1 Cor. 9:4-12). To assert authority, dignity, or right in Christian work also damages it. The Lord Jesus, while on earth, gave up His dignity (John 13:4-5), and the apostle would rather not use his right (1 Cor. 9:12).

Apparently, seeking glory from men is not as evil as covetousness. However, it is more subtle. The fall of the archangel was due to the seeking of glory. He became God's adversary because of his glory-seeking. Even though he was a leading angel with a very high position, he was still seeking glory. That was the cause of his fall. According to the New Testament, anyone who seeks glory of men is a follower of Satan. The seeking of glory is a trap spread by Satan to snare Christian workers. Therefore, it is very important that all Christian workers learn to avoid the snare of glory-seeking. However, not many have escaped this trap.

How much we shall be used by the Lord and how long our usefulness will last depend on whether we seek glory of men. If we seek glory, our usefulness in the hand of the Lord is finished. The seeking of glory for the self always kills one's usefulness. Therefore, may we all, especially the young, be warned never to seek glory in the Lord's work. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 98-101)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, msg. 12

## « WEEK 3 — DAY 5 »

### Morning Nourishment

1 Thes. 2:6 Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ.

1 Cor. 9:12 If others partake of this right over you, should not rather we? Yet we did not use this right, but we bear all things that we may not cause any hindrance to the gospel of Christ.

To seek glory from men is a real temptation to every Christian worker. Many have been devoured and spoiled by this matter. (1 Thes. 2:6, footnote 1)

First Thessalonians 2:6 indicates clearly that the apostles did not stand on their authority as apostles of Christ. They did not assume any standing or dignity. They had to forget that they were apostles and serve God's people as slaves. They were not to remind others of the fact that they were apostles of Christ. Instead, they were to keep in mind that they were brothers serving believers. (Life-study of 1Thessalonians, p. 101)

### Today's Reading

Those who are believers and also those who are not believers may consider the leading ones, the elders, or the apostles as dignitaries. However, in the local churches there are no dignitaries. Instead of being dignitaries, we are slaves serving one another. Nevertheless, I know of certain ones who did not assume anything when they did not have a position or title. But as soon as they were given a position, perhaps in a service group, they began to assume dignity. This is shameful. We should learn of Paul never to stand on our dignity or assert authority.

A sister whose husband is an elder should not assume dignity because she is the wife of an elder. An elder's wife is not the "First Lady." She is simply a little sister serving the church. Furthermore, her husband...as an elder...has been appointed to serve the church as a slave. We all should have this attitude.

People were the same in Paul's time as they are today. Then as well as now, there was the temptation to assume some kind of dignity or standing. Paul, however, did not stand on his dignity as an apostle in order to claim something for himself. By refusing to stand on his dignity or assert authority Paul is a good pattern for us all. If we follow this pattern, we shall kill a deadly disease germ in the Body of Christ, the germ of assuming a position.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:7 Paul says, "But we were gentle in your midst, as a nursing mother would cherish her own children." The Greek word rendered "nurse" (in KJV), *trophos*, sometimes means a mother; hence, it may denote a nursing mother (see Galatians 4:19). Cherishing includes nourishing. Therefore, this word not only includes nourishing but also includes tender care.

Even though Paul was a brother, he considered himself a nursing mother. Surely, he had no thought of position, dignity, or authority. The thought of being a nursing mother is very different from the thought of dignity or position. What position does a nursing mother have? What rank, dignity, or authority belongs to her? Her dignity consists in nourishing and cherishing her children, in taking care of them in a tender way.

The word cherish is lovely, a word of utmost tenderness. Paul regarded himself as a cherishing one, not merely as one who serves. He certainly did not control the believers. Neither did he merely serve them. Rather, he cherished them. His care for them was full of tenderness.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:8 Paul continues, "Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us." The word yearning indicates being affectionately fond of, affectionately desirous of, like a nursing mother affectionately interested in her child whom she nourishes and cherishes. This was what the apostles did with the new believers. (Life-study of 1Thessalonians, pp. 101-102)

Further Reading: The Vital Groups, msg. 10

## « WEEK 3 — DAY 6 »

### Morning Nourishment

1 Thes. 2:8-9 Yearning in this way over you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us. For you remember, brothers, our labor and travail: While working night and day so as not to be burdensome to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

The apostles not only imparted the gospel of God to the Thessalonians; they also imparted their own souls. To live a clean and upright life as portrayed in 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6 and 10, and to love the new converts, even by giving our own souls to them, as described in verses 7-9 and 11, are the prerequisites for infusing others with the salvation conveyed in the gospel we preach.

Paul's word in verse 8 about imparting their own souls to the Thessalonians can be compared to his word in 2 Corinthians 12 about being spent for the sake of the believers. Paul was willing to spend not only what he had, but was willing to spend himself, his very being. The apostles were willing to impart what they were into the believers. This can be compared to a nursing mother giving herself to her child. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 102-103)

### Today's Reading

The apostles did not want to be a burden on the Thessalonians. Therefore, they labored night and day in order to proclaim to them the gospel of God [1 Thes. 2:9].

In verse 10 Paul continues, "You are witnesses, as well as God, how in a holy and righteous and blameless manner we conducted ourselves toward you who believe." Holy refers to conduct toward God, righteous to conduct toward men, and blameless to all—God, men, and Satan. In order to conduct himself in this way, Paul had to exercise strict control over himself. Verse 10 reveals that the apostles were those who practiced self-control.

Verse 11 says, "Just as you know how we were to each one of you, as a father to his own children, exhorting you and consoling you and testifying." The apostle was strong in stressing what or how they were (1:5), for what they were opened the way to bring the new converts into God's full salvation.

In 2:11 Paul likens himself to a father exhorting his children. In cherishing the believers as their own children, the apostles considered themselves as nourishing mothers. In exhorting them, they considered themselves fathers.

Verse 12 says, "So that you might walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." God's calling is according to His selection, and it follows His selection (1:4). As worshippers of idols (1:9), the believers were in the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:26). Now, through the salvation in Christ, they are called and have believed into the kingdom of God, which is the sphere for them to worship and enjoy God under the divine ruling with a view of entering into God's glory. God's glory goes with His kingdom.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:12 Paul exhorts the believers to walk in a manner worthy of God. If he himself had not walked worthily of God, how could he have exhorted others to do so? In this matter also, he set an example for the believers to follow.

Verse 12 indicates that walking worthily of God is related to entering into His kingdom and being ushered into His glory. The thought here...is quite deep. Here we have a matter often neglected by Christians. Not many believers are taught to have a Christian walk that will enable them to enter into the kingdom of God, a walk that will usher them into God's glory. Many Christians have never heard such a word. Nevertheless, this is included as part of Paul's teaching to young believers.

To walk in a manner worthy of God is actually to live God. Only a life that lives God is worthy of God. When we live God, we walk worthily of Him. Such a walk will lead us into the kingdom and usher us into the glory of God. This is the goal of God's calling. God has called us to enter His kingdom and glory. (Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, pp. 103-105)

Further Reading: Life-study of 1 Thessalonians, msg. 12

## « WEEK 3 — HYMN

### Hymns, #1246

1

We give ourselves to follow the churches,  
Oneness in Christ display;  
Follow His move in all of the churches,  
Stand fast as one this way.  
We must follow the Spirit  
In all simplicity.  
In our spirit is Jesus—  
He follows perfectly!

2

We give ourselves to follow the followers,  
By this we truly learn;  
Never desiring to be the leaders,  
But to the Spirit turn.

3

We give ourselves the flock's steps to follow,  
Knowing the Shepherd's care.  
Now in the churches Jesus is leading  
And He is speaking there.

4

We give ourselves to Thee, O Lord Jesus,  
Never to turn aside;  
Where'er the Lamb goes, there we would follow,  
Follow whate'er betide.

5

We give ourselves to enter the kingdom,  
That marriage feast, with Him;  
Come persecution, suffering, and trials,  
Still we will enter in.

6

Christ wants some followers here in the churches,  
Followers of whom to say:  
“These saw My purpose, followed Me wholly”—  
May we be those today!

## WEEK 4 — OUTLINE

### Propagating the Resurrected Christ under the Heavenly Ministry of the Ascended Christ

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32-36; 3:15; 5:30-32; 8:4, 12; 13:1-4

#### « DAY 1 »

#### I. The book of Acts reveals a resurrected and ascended Christ who is in the heavens (1:3, 9-11, 22; 2:32-36):

- A. The Lord's living and ministry in the heavens are the content of the book of Acts.
- B. The Lord's ascension was His initiation into His living and ministry in the heavens (5:31):

- 1. This initiation brought Him into a new realm, that is, into the heavens where He now has His living and His ministry.
- 2. The book of Acts reveals that the resurrected and ascended Christ is now living in the heavens and ministering there.

#### C. Christ's ascension was God's exaltation of Him (2:33-36; 5:31):

- 1. The Lord was made Lord, the Lord of all, to possess all, and He was made Christ, God's Anointed, to carry out God's commission (2:36; 10:36; Heb. 1:9):

- a. As God, the Lord was the Lord all the time (Luke 1:43), but as man, He was made the Lord in His ascension after He brought His humanity into God in His resurrection.
- b. As God's sent and anointed One, He was Christ from the time that He was born (2:11; Matt. 1:16; 16:16; John 1:41), but as such a One, He was also officially made the Christ of God in His ascension.

- 2. God exalted Christ "to His right hand as Leader and Savior" (Acts 5:31):

- a. The ascended Christ is the Leader, the Originator, the Author, and the Inaugurator (3:15; Heb. 2:10; 12:2):

- (1) His being the Leader is a matter related to His authority (Matt. 28:18).
- (2) He rules sovereignly over the earth with His authority so that the environment may be fit for God's chosen people to receive His salvation (Acts 17:26-27; John 17:2).

#### « DAY 2 »

- b. The One God has exalted to His right hand is also the Savior (Acts 5:31):

- (1) Jesus' incarnation made Him a man, His human living qualified Him to be man's Savior, His crucifixion accomplished full redemption for man, His resurrection vindicated His redemptive work, and His exaltation

inaugurated Him to be the ruling Leader so that He might be the Savior.

(2) We were saved by the Christ on the throne, by the One in glory (3:13; Luke 24:26; Heb. 2:9; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11):

(a) When we were saved, we were seated with Him in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6).

(b) Christ saved us from the throne and to the throne; this is the ascended Christ as our Savior.

## II. In order to cooperate with the heavenly ministry of the ascended Christ for the propagation of the resurrected Christ, we need to know the intrinsic significance of the book of Acts:

A. The book of Acts is a record of a group of people who are resurrected and ascended with Christ, having Christ within them as their life and Christ upon them as their power and authority; they live by the Triune God within them as their life, and they act by the Triune God upon them as their strength, power, and authority (John 20:22; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

### « DAY 3 »

B. Acts is a record of a group of people who act and work in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body (v. 14; 13:1-4):

1. Acts reveals the move and activity of the Body, not of individual actions unrelated to the Body (8:1-17).

2. Acts contains a beautiful picture of the one accord in the activities and work of the believers who move in the Body, through the Body, and for the Body (2:44-47; 4:24, 32; 13:1-4; 16:1-5).

C. The book of Acts shows us the divine stream, the unique flow; there is only one stream, one current, of the flow (Gen. 2:8-12; Rev. 22:1-2; Acts 2:33).

D. In Acts there is a group of people who know the meaning of resurrection and ascension, who live by Christ as their life, who act by Christ as their power and authority, and who realize that they are the Body and act in the Body and for the Body in the one divine stream; this is the intrinsic significance of the book of Acts (John 20:22; Acts 1:8-11, 14; 2:1-4, 24, 32-33; 4:33).

### « DAY 4 »

## III. To carry out His heavenly ministry for the propagating of Himself so that the kingdom of God might be established for the building up of the churches as His fullness, the ascended Christ uses not a group of preachers trained by man's teaching to do a preaching work but a body of His witnesses, who bear a living testimony of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ (1:8):

A. In His ascension the Lord carries out His ministry in the heavens through these



witnesses, in His resurrection life and with His ascension power and authority, as recorded in Acts, to spread Himself as the development of the kingdom of God from Jerusalem unto the uttermost part of the earth (1:8):

1. Testifying requires experiences of seeing and enjoyment concerning the Lord or spiritual things; it is different from merely teaching (2:40).

2. Paul was appointed as a minister and a witness (26:16):

a. A minister is for the ministry; a witness, for the testimony.

b. The ministry is related mainly to the work, to what a minister does; a testimony is related to the person, to what a witness is.

B. The Lord's resurrection was the focus of the apostles' testimony (1:22; 2:32; 3:13, 15, 26; 10:39-40; 13:33; 17:3, 18):

## « DAY 5 »

1. God glorified His Servant Jesus through His resurrection and in His ascension (Luke 24:46; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11; Acts 3:13, 15, 26; 4:10, 33; 5:30-31).

2. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus points back to His incarnation, humanity, human living on the earth, and God-ordained death; and His resurrection points forward to His ascension, ministry and administration in heaven, and coming back (2:23; 1:9-11).

3. The Lord is both God and resurrection, possessing the indestructible life (John 1:1; 11:25; Heb. 7:16; Acts 2:24):

a. Since He is such an ever-living One, death is not able to hold Him.

b. He delivered Himself to death, but death had no way to detain Him; rather, death was defeated by Him, and He rose up from it (Rev. 1:18).

4. The apostles were witnesses of the resurrected Christ, not only in word but also by their life and action, especially bearing witness of His resurrection; bearing witness of Christ's resurrection is the crucial point, the focus, in carrying out God's New Testament economy (Acts 2:32; 4:33; 10:39-40; 17:3).

## « DAY 6 »

**IV. Our cooperation with the ascended Christ for the propagation of the resurrected Christ is a move in life for the spread of the gospel (8:26-29; 9:10-11; 10:1-3, 9-22):**

A. This move in life corresponds to the Lord's heavenly ministry in His ascension.

B. In Acts 8, 9, and 10 the Lord moved His disciples outwardly for the preaching of the gospel; He was ministering in the heavens to move some of His disciples:

1. In response to the Lord's heavenly ministry, Philip left Jerusalem for Gaza (8:26); this was the corresponding on Philip's side to move in life for the



preaching of the gospel.

2. In Acts 9 there was a marvelous triangle of Christ ministering in the heavens, with Ananias and Saul corresponding to it on earth.

3. In Acts 10 Peter cooperated with the Lord to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

C. This is the proper gospel preaching as a move in life under the heavenly ministry of Christ (5:42; 8:4, 12; 10:36; 11:20; 13:32):

1. Christ as the Head exercised His headship to move His disciples here and there, and they were on the alert, responding to His ministry from the heavens (11:1-18).

2. The preaching of the gospel in the Lord's recovery should be like this: a prevailing move in life, corresponding to Christ's heavenly ministry under His headship (1:8; 2:32-36; 5:30-32; 13:1-4; Eph. 1:22-23).

# « WEEK 4 — DAY 1 »

## Morning Nourishment

Acts 5:30-31 The God of our fathers has raised Jesus, whom you slew by hanging Him on a tree. This One God has exalted to His right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

The Lord's ascension was not the end of His activity. Rather, the Man-Savior's ascension was another initiation....Christ's ascension was His inauguration, His initiation, into His heavenly ministry. The Lord's conception was His first initiation, and His ascension was another initiation. His conception was the initiation of His life and ministry on earth; His ascension was the initiation of His living and ministry in the heavens. Hence, Christ's ascension was not the termination of His activity; instead, it was His initiation into further activity—His ministry in the heavens.

The first book written by Luke, his Gospel, describes the Lord's first initiation and His life and ministry on earth. Now there is the need of the second book, the book of Acts, to tell us into what kind of living and ministry the Lord has been initiated through His ascension. Therefore, Luke had the burden to write a second book to unveil the living and ministry of the ascended Christ. In Acts we see how the Lord lives and ministers in His ascension. (Life-study of Acts, pp. 2-3)

## Today's Reading

We would emphasize the fact that, according to the Gospel of Luke, the Lord lived on earth. That life and ministry were initiated by His conception and concluded by His resurrection. Then after His resurrection the Lord Jesus ascended to the heavens. This ascension was not a termination but another initiation. This initiation brought Him into a new realm, that is, into the heavens, where He now has another living with another ministry. This living and ministry are carried out not by the Jesus who was merely conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin and born in Bethlehem; it is carried out by the ascended Christ. The resurrected and ascended Christ is now living in the heavens and ministering there. The Lord's living and ministry in the heavens are the content of the book of Acts.

Christ's ascension was God's exaltation of Him. In exalting Christ, God made Him both Lord and Christ. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit is a proof that God has exalted the Lord Jesus and has made Him both Lord and Christ.

As God, the Lord was the Lord all the time (Luke 1:43; John 11:21; 20:28). But as man, He was made the Lord in His ascension after He brought His humanity into God in His resurrection. And as God's sent and anointed One, He was Christ from the time He was born (Luke 2:11; Matt. 1:16; John 1:41; Matt. 16:16). But as such a One, He was also officially made the very Christ of God in His ascension. The Lord was made Lord, as the Lord of all (Acts 10:36), to possess all; and He was made Christ, as God's Anointed (Heb. 1:9), to carry out God's commission. (Life-study of Acts, pp. 3, 79-81)

Acts 5:30 tells us that Christ was slain by the Jews on a tree. Acts 5:31 goes on to say that God has exalted the crucified Jesus "to His right hand as Leader and Savior." The Greek word rendered "Leader" is *archegos*, meaning "author," "origin," "originator," "chief leader," "captain." This word is used only four times in the New Testament and always in reference to Christ (3:15; Heb. 2:10; 12:2). It has been translated a number of different ways in various versions because there is no precise English equivalent to the Greek. The thought is that this One is the origin and Originator, the Author, the Leader, and the Inaugurator. He is above all, and He is spontaneously the Ruler with authority. God has exalted Jesus, the One rejected and killed by the Jewish leaders, as the highest Leader. His being the Leader is a matter related to His authority. He rules sovereignly over the earth with His authority so that the environment may be fit for God's chosen people to receive His salvation (Acts 17:26-27; John 17:2). (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 2987-2988)

Further Reading: Life-study of Acts, msgs. 1-2; The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 31

## « WEEK 4 — DAY 2 »

### Morning Nourishment

John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed into them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

Luke 24:49 And behold, I send forth the promise of My Father upon you; but as for you, stay in the city until you put on power from on high.

The One God has exalted to His right hand is not only the Leader but also the Savior. Leader is related to His authority, and Savior to His salvation. Jesus' incarnation made Him a man, His human living on earth qualified Him to be man's Savior, His crucifixion accomplished full redemption for man, His resurrection vindicated His redemptive work, and His exaltation inaugurated Him to be the ruling Leader so that He might be the Savior.

According to Peter's word in Acts 5:31, the Lord is the Savior "to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." To give repentance and forgiveness of sins to God's chosen people requires Christ to be exalted as a ruling Leader and Savior. His sovereign ruling causes and leads God's chosen people to repent, and His salvation based upon His redemption affords them forgiveness of sins. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 2988-2989)

### Today's Reading

Although the title Savior is applied to Christ in His earthly ministry (John 4:42), He was not officially the Savior until His ascension. We were saved officially by the Christ on the throne, by the One in glory. When we were saved, we were seated with Him in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6). Christ has saved us from the throne and to the throne. This is the ascended Christ as our Savior. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 2989)

The book of Acts is a record of a group of people who are resurrected and ascended with Christ, having Christ within them as their life and Christ upon them as their power and authority. They live not by themselves but by Christ as life. They forget about their own life and deny themselves. Moreover, they walk, act, and work not by their own strength, their own way, or their own method but by Christ as their power, their way, and their method. This Christ who is now their method, way, and power is the very Holy Spirit who came down upon them. In other words, they live by the Triune God within them as their life, and they act by the Triune God upon them as their strength, their way, and their method. This is the contents of the book of Acts.

In principle, Acts is a record only of that group of people who are resurrected and ascended with Christ, having Christ within them as their life and Christ upon them as their power. Moreover, they live not by themselves but by this Christ within, and they act not according to knowledge, doctrine, teaching, rules, regulations, forms, and traditions but according to the living Christ upon them....If we take this point of view and go back to read Acts again, we will gain the proper insight into it.

The book of Acts is the record of a group of people who are regenerated by the Triune God and inaugurated with authority by the Triune God. These people have the Triune God within them as their life and upon them as their authority and power. They act in this way and live by the life within. This is the basic thought of the book of Acts....The believers mentioned in Acts moved and worked with authority and power, not as many do today.

We must realize the significance of the Lord's resurrection and ascension, including both the breathing of His breath into us on the day of resurrection and the rushing of the violent wind on the day of Pentecost. Now we have the breath within us and the rushing wind upon us. We have the Triune God as our life within and the very same Triune God as our authority without. As such, we are the church. This is the critical transition in the book of Acts. (CWWL, 1964, vol. 2, "A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church, Part 1—the Gospels and the Acts," pp. 203-204, 197)

Further Reading: Life-study of Acts, msgs. 3-4; CWWL, 1964, vol. 2, "A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church, Part 1—the Gospels and the Acts," ch. 6

## « WEEK 4 — DAY 3 »

### Morning Nourishment

Acts 1:14 These all continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

4:33 And with great power the apostles gave testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

From the very first chapter [of Acts] neither Peter, John, nor those one hundred twenty acted individually. Rather, all the actions of this group of people were the actions of the one Body. The one hundred twenty prayed together with one accord, and they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, preached the gospel, bore the testimony of Jesus, and always moved and acted as one Body (1:14; 2:1, 4, 14, 46-47). (CWWL, 1964, vol. 2, "A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church, Part 1—the Gospels and the Acts," p. 205)

### Today's Reading

[In Acts] it is difficult to find anyone...who acted individualistically. Although it appears that Philip preached the gospel by himself in chapter 8 when he was in Samaria, it was Peter and John who came to confirm his preaching (vv. 5, 14-17). The Holy Spirit, the power upon the Body, did not come upon those believers through Philip's preaching. It was when Peter and John came and laid hands on the Samaritan believers that the Holy Spirit on the Body was transmitted to them. This proves that even Philip's preaching was not an individual action. His preaching was related to the move of the Body. Therefore, chapter after chapter in Acts records the move and activity of the Body, not of individual believers.

The activities recorded in Acts were not only of the Body but also for the Body, that is, for the building up of the church. No **one acted in a way that had nothing to do with the Body. Rather, everyone acted in a way that was for the building up of the Body.** The issue and result of what they did was the building up of the church....Many in today's Christianity act in a way that is not of the Body or for the Body. As we have seen, Acts is a record of a group of people who act and work all the time for the Body and through the Body. Therefore, in this book the churches are built up out of the activities of those people. Acts contains a beautiful picture of the one accord in the activities, work, and move of the believers. They always moved in the Body and for the Body.

Beginning from Jerusalem in Acts 2 there was only one flow on this earth, and all the early disciples moved, acted, and worked in the flow. There were not two currents in the flow, but always one. All those who were raised up by the Lord sooner or later were brought into the flow. While the flow proceeded westward, believers such as Aquila, Priscilla, Apollos, and others were raised up by the Lord and brought into this one stream (18:2, 24-28)....The work in the flow is the work of the Lord's present testimony.

Thus far we have seen the principles of the book of Acts. If we apply these principles when we read chapter after chapter, we will be clear about what is in Acts. We will know its real meaning, and we will have the insight into it. The central meaning of the flow in Acts is that there is a group of people who know the meaning of resurrection and ascension. They live not by themselves but by Christ as their life, and they act not according to certain ways or methods but by the living Christ as their strength, power, method, and way. Moreover, they realize that they are the Body, and they always act in the Body and for the Body in the one divine stream. May we all be clear to such an extent that we not only know the resurrection and ascension, but we live in resurrection and act in ascension, not by ourselves but in the Body, for the Body, and in one flow. This is the real meaning of the book of Acts. (CWWL, 1964, vol. 2, "A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church, Part 1—the Gospels and the Acts," pp. 205-208)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1964, vol. 2, "A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church, Part 1—the Gospels and the Acts," chs. 7-8

## « WEEK 4 — DAY 4 »

### Morning Nourishment

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

26:16 ...I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you.

What the ascended Christ wants to use to carry out His heavenly ministry for the propagating of Himself so that the kingdom of God might be established for the building up of the churches for His expression is not a group of preachers trained by man's teaching to do a preaching work. Rather, the Lord wants to use a body of His witnesses, who bear a living testimony of the incarnated, crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ. According to the book of Acts, Satan could instigate the Jewish religionists and utilize the Gentile politicians to bind the apostles and their evangelical ministry, but he could not bind Christ's living witnesses and their living testimony. The more the Jewish religionists and the Gentile politicians bound the apostles and their evangelical ministry, the stronger and brighter these witnesses of Christ and their living testimony became. In His appearing to Paul on the way to Damascus, the Lord clearly told him that He appointed him not only a minister but also a witness....As a living witness of Christ, Paul had testified concerning Him in Jerusalem and would testify of Him in Rome (Acts 23:11). (Life-study of Acts, pp. 594-595)

### Today's Reading

Witnesses are those who bear a living testimony of the resurrected and ascended Christ in life. They differ from preachers who merely preach doctrines in letters. As recorded in Acts, the ascended Christ carries out His ministry in the heavens through these witnesses in His resurrection life and with His ascension power and authority to spread Himself as the development of the kingdom of God unto the remotest part of the earth.

As Paul was on the way to Damascus, Christ revealed certain things to him, and in those things Paul saw Christ. The Lord indicated that He would reveal more things to Paul and in those things the Lord Himself would appear to him. Therefore, what Paul saw was not merely the things themselves but Christ as the One appearing in all these things.

In Acts 20:21 Paul [says], "Solemnly testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance unto God and faith in our Lord Jesus." Once again, the word "testifying" is used. Testifying requires experiences of seeing, participating, and enjoying. It is different from mere teaching. Paul's use of this word here indicates that he himself had experienced repentance unto God and faith in the Lord Jesus. Therefore, he could testify concerning what he had experienced. He did not merely preach and teach; he testified of what he had passed through in his experience of repentance and faith.

When the Lord Jesus appeared to Paul, He commissioned him, appointing him as a minister and a witness. Concerning this, the Lord said to him, "Rise up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a minister and a witness both of the things in which you have seen Me and of the things in which I will appear to you" (26:16). Here we see that the Lord appointed Paul both a minister and a witness. A minister is for the ministry; a witness is for the testimony. Ministry is mainly related to the work, to what the minister does. Testimony is related to the person, to what the witness is.

The Lord's resurrection is the focus of the apostles' testimony [1:22]. It refers back to His incarnation, humanity, human living on earth, and God-ordained death (2:23), and points forward to His ascension, ministry and administration in heaven, and coming back. Thus the apostles' testimony of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, is all-inclusive, as depicted in the whole book of Acts. They preached and ministered the all-inclusive Christ as revealed in the entire Scripture. (Life-study of Acts, pp. 595-596, 460, 594, 40)

Further Reading: Life-study of Acts, msgs. 10, 68



## « WEEK 4 — DAY 5 »

### Morning Nourishment

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

15 And the Author of life you killed, whom God has raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

[In Acts 3] Peter said..., “Men of Israel, why are you marveling at this? Or why are you gazing at us, as though by our own power or godliness we have made him walk? The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him” (vv. 12-13). Some manuscripts add “the God of” before Isaac and Jacob. Why in verse 13 did Peter speak of God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Why did he not speak simply of God? This title refers to the Triune God, Jehovah, the great I AM (Exo. 3:14-15). According to the Lord’s word in Matthew 22, this divine title implies resurrection: “Concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (vv. 31-32). Peter referred to God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because this indicates that He is the God of resurrection....God glorified the Lord Jesus through His resurrection and in His ascension (Luke 24:26; Heb. 2:9; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-11). (Life-study of Acts, pp. 101-102)

### Today’s Reading

Regarding the Lord as a man, the New Testament tells us that God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 8:11). Considering Him as God, it tells us that He Himself rose from the dead (Rom. 14:9). In the same principle, regarding Him as a man, the New Testament tells us that He was killed by men (Mark 9:31). But considering Him as God, it tells us that He laid down His life of Himself (John 10:18). This also proves His dual status—human and divine.

Acts 2:24 says that it was not possible for the Lord to be held by death. The Lord is both God and resurrection (John 1:1; 11:25), possessing the indestructible life (Heb. 7:16). Because He is such an ever-living One, death is not able to hold Him. He delivered Himself to death, but death had no way to detain Him; rather, death was defeated by Him, and He rose up from it.

Acts 2:25 says, “For David says regarding Him, ‘I saw the Lord continually before me, because He is on my right hand, that I may not be shaken.’” The words “I saw” introduce a declaration of Christ in His resurrection.

Acts 2:28 continues, “You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.” Here the ways of life are the ways to get out of death into resurrection. The Greek word for “presence” also means countenance. Christ was resurrected into God’s presence, especially in His ascension (2:34; Heb. 1:3).

In Acts 2:29 through 31 Peter says, “Men, brothers, I can say to you plainly concerning the patriarch David that he both deceased and was buried, and his tomb is among us until this day. Therefore, being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him to seat One from the fruit of his loins upon his throne, he, seeing this beforehand, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was He abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.”

In Acts 2:32 Peter gives a concluding word concerning Christ’s resurrection: “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we all are witnesses.” The Greek word for “which” here may also be rendered “whom.” The apostles were witnesses of the resurrected Christ, not in word only, but also by their life and action. Especially they bore witness of His resurrection (4:33), which is the crucial focus in carrying out God’s New Testament economy. (Life-study of Acts, pp. 78-79)

Further Reading: Life-study of Acts, msg. 13; The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 30



## « WEEK 4 — DAY 6 »

### Morning Nourishment

Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and announcing the gospel of Jesus as the Christ.

13:2 And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

Ever since His ascension the Lord has been ministering in the heavens. For this ministry to be worked out on the earth, however, requires a correspondence to it on our side. Nearly twenty centuries have gone by, but not much has been fulfilled on earth. Thus, as this age draws to a close there is an urgent need for us to correspond to the Lord's ministry. (CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, "The Heavenly Ministry of Christ," p. 93)

### Today's Reading

During the time of the Acts, the disciples were moving on with the Lord in life [for the spread of the gospel]. This was so in the case of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, Ananias and Saul, and Peter and Cornelius [cf. Acts 8:26-39; 9:10-11; 10:1-3, 9-22]. All three were moves in life that corresponded to the Lord's ministry in the heavens.

[In contrast], what is revealed in Ephesians and Colossians is not a move for the gospel but the growth and function of the Body [cf. Col. 2:18-19; Eph. 4:14-16]. The one is to bring people to the Lord; the other is to build up the Body. For people to be brought to the Lord requires a move in life; for the Body to be built up, the growth and function in life is needed.

The move in life to bring people to the Lord is outward, but the growth in life for the building of the Body is inward. For both the outward and the inward aspects we need to correspond to the Lord's ministry in the heavens.

In Acts 8, 9, and 10 the Lord moved His disciples outwardly for the preaching of the gospel. He was ministering in the heavens to move some of His disciples. Suppose Philip at that time had been away loving the world, Ananias had fallen into sin, and Peter had gone back to Galilee to go fishing. Christ would then have been ministering in the heavens, but there would have been no response on earth. Praise the Lord, these three were ready to respond!

In response to the Lord's heavenly ministry, Philip left Jerusalem for Gaza (8:26). While he was walking along in the desert, he was responding to the heavenly Christ. The Lord had one disciple there in the desert whom He could move. When He said to Philip, "Approach and join this chariot" (v. 29), Philip ran up and heard the eunuch reading Isaiah. Do you see how Philip was corresponding to the heavenly ministry? It was through this that the Ethiopian eunuch was brought to the Lord. This was the corresponding on Philip's side to the move in life for the preaching of the gospel.

The situation in Acts 9 was similar. Ananias must have been praying when a vision came to him from the heavens. The Lord spoke to him via heavenly television and directed him to Saul. Saul was also praying when the heavenly television transmission came to him, and he saw Ananias coming. There was a marvelous triangle of Christ ministering in the heavens, with Ananias and Saul corresponding to it on earth, all aimed at bringing Saul to the Lord.

In Acts 10 a Roman centurion named Cornelius was praying when an angel came and told him to send for Peter. Suppose Peter had been unavailable when the messengers came to him from Cornelius....He went with them, and Cornelius, his family, and probably the soldiers as well, were all brought to the Lord.

This is the proper gospel preaching. It is a move in life under the heavenly ministry of Christ. It is not a movement organized by a mission board. Christ as the Head exercised His headship to move His disciples here and there. They were on the alert, responding to His ministry from the heavens. I hope that the preaching of the gospel in the recovery will be like this: a prevailing move in life, corresponding to the Lord's heavenly ministry under His headship. (CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, "The Heavenly Ministry of Christ," pp. 93-95)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, "The Heavenly Ministry of Christ," ch. 5; The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 74

## « WEEK 4 — HYMN

### Hymns, #910

1

The overflow of life is work,  
The work should be our living!  
What we experience e'er should be  
The message we are giving.  
When living and the work are one,  
The work will be effectual;  
When message and the life are one,  
The word will be successful.

2

The work must be the fruit of life,  
Born thru the Spirit's flowing;  
As branches of the Lord, the vine,  
Fruit bearing, life bestowing.  
'Tis Christ Himself thru us to work,  
Himself as life expressing,  
And all the riches of His life  
To others manifesting.

3

'Tis not a movement borne of man,  
But by His power moving;  
'Tis not the deeds done outwardly,  
But inward action proving.  
'Tis not the work of enterprise,  
But 'tis His life confessing;  
'Tis not to toil for our success,  
But 'tis Himself expressing.

4

Our plans, our aims, our energy  
We must abandon wholly,  
That He may work His plan thru us,  
His aim and object solely.  
Ourselves, with all we are and have,  
To death we must surrender,  
That Christ may live Himself thru us  
With riches and with splendor.

## WEEK 5 — OUTLINE

### **The Revelation, Experience, and Enjoyment of the Ascended Christ as a Merciful, Faithful, and Great High Priest**

Scripture Reading: Gen. 14:18-20; Heb. 2:17; 4:14-15; 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 27; 8:1-2

#### « DAY 1 »

#### **I. The basic significance of a priest in the Bible is not that a priest serves God but that a priest ministers God to man:**

- A. The first mention of a priest in the Scriptures establishes the principle of a priest.
- B. The first time the word priest is used in the Bible is with Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20):
  - 1. The foundational story of the priesthood in the Bible is that of a priest coming from God and ministering something of God to God's people:
    - a. After Abraham gained the victory, Melchizedek, a type of Christ as the kingly High Priest, appeared; it must have been through his intercession that Abraham was able to slaughter the four kings, recover Lot, and gain the victory (vv. 1-3, 12-20; Heb. 7:1-3).
    - b. Today Christ, our High Priest, is interceding for us in a hidden way (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25) that we may be His overcomers to defeat God's enemies so that through our victory Christ can be manifested openly in His second coming.
    - c. Melchizedek came from God and ministered something of God to Abraham; the bread and wine signify God being ministered to us to nourish, refresh, sustain, comfort, and strengthen us (Gen. 14:18).
  - 2. In His heavenly ministry Christ was designated a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:6, 10), not to offer sacrifices for sin as Aaron did but to minister to us the very God who was processed through incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, signified by the bread and wine (Matt. 26:26-28).
  - 3. The main point with respect to Christ as the High Priest is that He ministers God into us (Heb. 8:2).

#### « DAY 2 »

#### **II. Hebrews is a book on the priesthood in its three aspects (2:17; 5:6; 7:16, 25):**

- A. The first aspect—the aspect of the Aaronic priesthood—is for offering sacrifices to God for our sins (10:12):

- 1.The Aaronic priesthood solves the problem of sin (7:27; 9:12, 28).
  - 2.Christ put away sin by offering Himself to God as the one sacrifice for sins (v. 26; 10:10-12).
  - 3.The Aaronic priesthood was not part of God's initial intention but was added later because of the problem of sin (1:3; John 1:29; Rom. 8:3).
- B.The second aspect—the aspect of the kingly priesthood—is for ministering God into us (Heb. 5:10; 7:1-2):
- 1.As a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, Christ is the King of righteousness and the King of peace (Isa. 32:17; 9:6).
  - 2.Christ's purifying of sins is typified by the work of Aaron, whereas His sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty on high is according to the order of Melchizedek (Psa. 110:1, 4; Heb. 1:3; 8:1).
  - 3.As the kingly High Priest, Christ ministers to us whatever we need, dispensing the processed and consummated Triune God into us as our supply to fulfill God's eternal purpose.

### <<    **DAY 3**    >>

- C.The third aspect—the aspect of the divine priesthood—is for saving us to the uttermost (7:25):
- 1.For Christ to be kingly is a matter of status, but for Christ to be divine is a matter of constituent, that is, of having the necessary element that constitutes Him a divine High Priest.
  - 2.Christ's divinity constitutes Him a High Priest who is living, full of life, and able to continue His priesthood perpetually (vv. 17, 24).
  - 3.The divine priesthood is the saving power of the indestructible life; thus, the divine priesthood is the presence of life and the absence of death (v. 16).

### <<    **DAY 4**    >>

## III. Christ is a merciful and faithful High Priest (2:17):

A.Hebrews 1 and 2 reveal that Christ is fully qualified to be our High Priest:

- 1.He is the Son of God with the divine nature (1:8).
- 2.He is the Son of Man with the human nature (2:6, 9).
- 3.He was incarnated to be like us (vv. 14, 17).
- 4.He was tempted, tried (v. 18).
- 5.He suffered death (v. 9).
- 6.He made propitiation for our sins (v. 17).
- 7.He destroyed the devil (v. 14).
- 8.He released us from the slavery of death (v. 15).

9. He brought forth many brothers in resurrection to form the church (vv. 11-12).

10. He was crowned with glory and honor in His exaltation (v. 9).

11. He is the Author, Captain, of our salvation (v. 10).

12. He helps us (v. 16).

B. Christ is able to be a merciful and faithful High Priest because He is both the Son of God with divinity and the Son of Man with humanity:

1. His being merciful corresponds to His being a man.

2. His being faithful corresponds to His being God.

3. Christ's divinity and humanity are typified by the gold and the linen in the ephod worn by the high priest (Exo. 28:6-14; 39:2-7):

a. The weaving together of the gold and the linen in the ephod typifies the mingling of divinity and humanity in Christ.

b. "There is a fabric in this universe woven with golden and linen thread and containing the five colors of golden yellow, pure white, blue, purple, and scarlet. This is the ephod that the Lord Jesus is wearing today. He is still clad in a garment made of gold and linen and with five beautiful colors expressing His divinity, humanity, heavenliness, kingliness, and redemption." (Life-study of Exodus, p. 1372).

## << DAY 5 >>

### IV. Christ is a great High Priest (Heb. 4:14-15):

A. As our High Priest, Christ is great in His person, in His work, and in His attainment (1:5, 8; 2:6; 1:3; 2:9-10, 14-15, 17; 6:20; 9:24).

B. As our great High Priest, Christ was tempted in all respects like us, yet without sin; He has passed through the heavens, and He is touched with the feeling of our weaknesses (4:14-15).

C. As our great High Priest, Christ bears us before God in the Holy of Holies (9:24; Exo. 28:9-12, 15-30):

1. In the Old Testament the high priest typifies Christ as our High Priest.

2. Whenever the high priest went into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, he bore upon his shoulders and upon his breast the names of the children of Israel before God (vv. 9-12, 15-30).

3. Christ is our merciful, faithful, and great High Priest, and we are on His shoulders (His bearing strength) and on His heart (His love).

4. As Christ bears us before God in the Holy of Holies, He ministers the processed and consummated Triune God into our being (Heb. 8:2).

D. We should respond to Christ's priesthood by coming forward with boldness

to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace for timely help (4:16):

1. Since today our spirit is the place of God's habitation (Eph. 2:22), it is now the gate of heaven (Gen. 28:12-17) where Christ is the ladder that joins us, the people on earth, to heaven, and brings heaven to us (John 1:51).
2. Hence, whenever we turn to our spirit, we enter through the gate of heaven and touch the throne of grace in heaven through Christ as the heavenly ladder.

## « DAY 6 »

**V. Although Christ as the High Priest is taking care of us, we all have our own thought and feeling as to how He should care for us; many times we do not know what is best for us or what the reason is for certain things; only the Lord as the High Priest knows the reason, and His care for us is always positive (Rom. 8:28-29):**

- A. When the apostle Paul prayed to the Lord, asking Him to remove the thorn (2 Cor. 12:7-8), the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness" (v. 9).
- B. Instead of removing the thorn, the Lord imparted Himself into Paul as grace, enabling the apostle to know how precious and sufficient He is.
- C. This experience of Christ as our High Priest, who bears us on His shoulders and breast and ministers God into us, is an experience in the Holy of Holies, where we enjoy God Himself and all His riches; this experience of Christ as our High Priest is the highest experience and enjoyment.

**VI. Ultimately, Christ as the High Priest is caring for God's need and interests:**

- A. God will listen to our prayer when our prayer to God is toward Christ, the kingdom of God, and the house of God as the goal in God's economy (1 Kings 8:48; Dan. 6:10).
- B. No matter for whom we are praying, our prayers should be aimed at the interests of God, that is, at Christ and the church as God's interests on earth, for the fulfilling of God's economy (Eph. 5:32; 6:17-18).

**VII. Christ's heavenly ministry as the High Priest in ascension consummates in the New Jerusalem, which will be the mingling of divinity with humanity to be the very expansion, enlargement, increase, and expression of the Triune God in humanity forever as the ultimate goal of God's economy (Rev. 21:2, 9-11).**



# ◀◀ WEEK 5 — DAY 1 ▶▶

## Morning Nourishment

Gen. 14:18-20 And Melchizedek the king of Salem brought out bread and wine. Now he was priest of God the Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of God the Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God the Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand...

A priest is not only one who serves God but also one who ministers God into man....In a sense, serving God is secondary, while ministering God to man is primary. The basic significance of the priesthood is not to serve God but to minister God to man. If, as priests, we only know how to render service to God without knowing how to minister God to man, we shall be quite poor.

The first mention of the word priest in the Bible is with Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20). Melchizedek was the first priest in the Bible. As we have pointed out on other occasions, the first mention of a thing in the Bible establishes the principle for that category of things. Therefore, the first mention of the priest, that of Melchizedek, establishes the principle of a priest. If you examine the case of Melchizedek as the priest of the most high God, you will see that he did not go from man to God but came from God to man. He did not go to God and serve God; he came from God and ministered something of God to Abraham, God's seeker. After the case of Melchizedek, there is much development of this matter of the priesthood in the Bible. But we must not forget that the foundational story of the priesthood is that of a priest coming from God ministering something of God to God's people. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 145-146)

## Today's Reading

Melchizedek is a type of Christ as the kingly High Priest (Heb. 7:1-3...). After Abraham gained the victory, Melchizedek appeared. Before his appearing, Melchizedek, a priest of God, must have been interceding for Abraham. It must have been through his intercession that Abraham was able to slaughter the four kings and gain the victory (cf. Exo. 17:8-13). Today Christ, our High Priest, is interceding for us in a hidden way (Rom. 8:34b; Heb. 7:25b) that we may be His overcomers to defeat God's enemies, so that through our victory Christ can be manifested openly in His second coming. (Gen. 14:18, footnote 1)

The main point with respect to Christ as the High Priest is not that He serves God but that He ministers God to us. We must go deeper than the superficial concept that a priest is one who serves God. Everyone, including the unbelievers on the street, knows that a Catholic priest is one who serves God, burns incense, and fulfills his "holy" duty. Even the heathen religions have priests. We need to cross the river out of this low concept into a higher one. God does not need your service, but He does want you to minister Him to people. As the High Priest, Christ's major job is to minister God to us. Mainly what Christ does within you is to minister God into you. This is our High Priest. He is continually doing one thing—ministering God into us. Some may say that Melchizedek did not minister God. But what about the bread and the wine—what do they signify? The bread and the wine signify God as our enjoyment, God being ministered to us to refresh, sustain, support, strengthen, and nourish us that we may grow with all the riches of God. This is the primary task of a priest. In principle, we who serve God today are His priests. As priests, our main responsibility is to minister Him to people.

This is proved by the coming of Melchizedek to Abraham (Gen. 14:18-22)....Melchizedek was the priest of the Most High God. As the priest of the Most High God, Melchizedek did not offer sacrifices to God for Abraham's sin; he ministered bread and wine to him. As indicated by the symbols of the Lord's table in the Bible, bread and wine signify the processed God as our supply. Our High Priest, Christ, is not according to the order of Aaron offering sacrifices to God; He is according to the order of Melchizedek ministering the processed God to us. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 146-147, 360)

Further Reading: Life-study of Genesis, msg. 43

## « WEEK 5 — DAY 2 »

### Morning Nourishment

Heb. 2:17 Hence He should have been made like His brothers in all things that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

5:6 Even as also in another place He says, “You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

According to the Scriptures, there are three aspects of the priesthood: the aspect of the Aaronic priesthood, the aspect of the kingly priesthood, and the aspect of the divine priesthood. The Aaronic aspect of the priesthood is for offering sacrifices to God for our sins. Hence, the Aaronic priesthood is mainly concerned with the sin offering. The kingly aspect of the priesthood is for ministering the processed God to us as our life supply. The aspect of the divine priesthood is for saving us to the uttermost. Therefore, we have three words to describe the three aspects of the priesthood: offering for the Aaronic aspect, ministering for the kingly aspect, and saving for the divine aspect. Offering solves the problem of sin, ministering imparts the processed God to us as our daily supply, and saving rescues us to the uttermost. The saving of the divine priesthood rescues us especially from death and all of the environment of death. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 381)

### Today's Reading

While the Aaronic priesthood solves the problem of sin, the kingly priesthood ministers God to us, not as the object of our worship but as our enjoyment for our daily supply....Eating and drinking of God is the best worship. The worship that satisfies God's heart's desire to the uttermost is that we enjoy Him as our supply.

That man should eat and drink of God was the original and initial intention of God in His eternal plan (Gen. 2:9-10). In God's eternal plan, God intended to dispense Himself into man to be man's everything that man might become His complete expression. This intention can only be accomplished by Christ's kingly priesthood, which ministers the processed God to us as our daily supply. However, before this was accomplished, sin came in. Therefore, the problem of sin had to be solved. But solving the problem of sin was not intended by God to fulfill His eternal purpose; it was added later due to the entrance of sin caused by the fall of man. Because of man's fall, sin came in to frustrate and damage God's purpose of ministering Himself into man as man's daily supply. Since Satan had brought in sin to frustrate God's purpose, the problem of sin had to be solved. Hence, there was the need of the Aaronic priesthood, which was brought in to solve the problem of sin. By this we can see that the Aaronic priesthood was not a part of God's initial intention but was added later. Many Christians, forgetting the initial things and concentrating on what was added later, neglect the kingly priesthood and concentrate on the Aaronic priesthood. The Aaronic priesthood solves the problem of sin, whereas the kingly priesthood fulfills God's eternal purpose. The Aaronic priesthood took away sin, and the kingly priesthood brought in God as our grace. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 381-382)

According to the work and ministry of Christ, this book has a turn at Hebrews 7:1, a turn from earth to heaven. To the end of chapter 6, what is revealed is mainly Christ's work on earth, typified by the priesthood of Aaron. That section is the word of foundation. From this verse, Christ's ministry in heaven according to the order of Melchizedek is unveiled. This section is the word of perfection, which shows us how the heavenly Christ ministers in the heavenly tabernacle. His purifying of sins is typified by the work of Aaron, while His sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (1:3) is according to the order of Melchizedek (Psa. 110:1, 4). His work on the cross on earth, typified by the work of Aaron, affords us forgiveness of sins. His ministry on the throne in heaven ministers to us the overcoming of sin. His cross delivered us out of Egypt; His throne brings us into Canaan. The Hebrew believers participated in His work on the cross. Now they had to press on to enter into the enjoyment of His ministry on the throne. (Heb. 7:1, footnote 1)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msgs. 28, 31-32

## « WEEK 5 — DAY 3 »

### Morning Nourishment

Heb. 7:15-16 ...It is according to the likeness of Melchizedek that a different Priest arises, who has been appointed not according to the law of a fleshy commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life.

25 Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them.

Hebrews 7, a chapter on the priesthood of Christ, reveals two aspects of Christ's priesthood [according to the order of Melchizedek]. The first aspect is the kingly priesthood, and the second aspect is the divine priesthood....Christ is a kingly priest. His status is kingly, royal. Although He is a High Priest, He did not come out of the tribe of the priests but out of the tribe of the kings—Judah. Kingship is His status and makes Him a kingly priest.

Kingship is related to both righteousness and peace because kingship is a kind of rule and authority. In order to maintain righteousness and peace, we need authority. If Christ is to minister the processed God to us as our bread and wine, there must be an environment that is full of righteousness and peace....Righteousness and peace come out of His kingship, for when the King is here, no one will fight. Everything will be peaceful. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 367)

### Today's Reading

The second aspect of Christ's priesthood in Hebrews 7 is the divine priesthood. For Christ to be kingly is a matter of status, but for Him to be divine is a matter of constituent, a matter of His having the necessary, basic element that constitutes Him to be such a High Priest. Christ's being divine refers to His nature. Christ is kingly according to His royal status and divine according to His divine nature. He is kingly because He is a King and He is divine because He is the Son of God. Christ, the Son of God, not only has kingship but also divinity....His divinity constitutes Him as a High Priest who is living and full of life so that He may be able to continue His priesthood perpetually.

With Christ as the divine High Priest there is no death [because He is life]. He has conquered, subdued, and swallowed death....Christ is divine. Divinity is His very essence, nature, element, and makeup....Since Christ is divine, wherever He is, there is no death. Wherever He is, there is resurrection and death is swallowed....Christ's priesthood is the absence of death.

His priesthood is constituted, composed, with His divinity. As wood is the element of a table, so divinity is the element of Christ's being the High Priest....On the one hand, the priesthood of Christ is the absence of death; on the other hand, it is the presence of life. Thus, the priesthood of Christ is the absence of death and the presence of life. As the kingly High Priest, Christ ministers the processed God to us, and as the divine High Priest, wherever He is, life is present. His priesthood is the presence of life....Our High Priest has not been constituted with the law but with the power of an indestructible life [v. 16].

The Greek word translated "uttermost" in 7:25 has the same root as the Greek word for perfection....To be saved to the uttermost is to be brought into Christ's perfection. The divine Son of God was incarnated, lived on earth, passed through death, was resurrected, and has been fully perfected forever....In Christ, the perfected Son of God, the One who has been resurrected and uplifted, there is no...vanity, groaning, decay, bondage, and corruption, [which] are all by-products of death. Christ, the perfected One, is able to save us from all of these by-products of death and to bring us into His perfection....This is the saving to the uttermost, the saving to perfection. This is the saving of the divine priesthood of Christ.

The life that we have received is an indestructible life, and nothing on earth, in heaven, or in hell can deal with it. This is the life that constitutes the divine priesthood...[which] is able to save us to the uttermost, saving us from all the by-products of death into Christ's complete perfection—glorification. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 368-369, 384, 392)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msgs. 33-34

## « WEEK 5 — DAY 4 »

### Morning Nourishment

Heb. 2:17-18 Hence He should have been made like His brothers in all things that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For being tempted in that which He Himself has suffered, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

Christ is the Son of God, God Himself, and the Son of Man, man Himself. [In Hebrews 2:17] merciful corresponds with His being a man, and faithful corresponds with His being God. In order to be faithful we not only need virtue but also ability....This High Priest is not merely an honest man; He is the faithful God. God is faithful (10:23). He is able to fulfill whatever He says. God never lies (6:18). Whatever He has spoken He is able to fulfill. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 141-142)

### Today's Reading

Being merciful corresponds to the point of Christ's being a man. He became a man and lived on earth as a man passing through all the human sufferings....He knows how to be merciful to man. He is a man with the experiences of human life, with the experiences of human suffering.

Christ [is] able to be a merciful and faithful High Priest...because He is the Son of Man with the human nature and the Son of God with the divine nature. He is fully qualified.

He was incarnated to be like us (Heb. 2:14, 17). We may even say that He is more than like us, for He suffered in His human life some things we have not suffered. In order to be qualified to be a merciful High Priest, He became like us, sympathizing with all of our weaknesses.

The Lord Jesus is qualified to be the High Priest because He was tried (2:18). If you read the Gospels again, you will see that no other person has been subject to so many troubles, attacks, misunderstandings, and rumors as the Lord Jesus....Sometimes the Lord Jesus spoke a word and the religionists picked on it and twisted it, trying to make a case out of it against the Lord.

Christ is also qualified to be our High Priest because He suffered death (2:9). The death that the Lord Jesus passed through was truly a baptism. Once the Lord Jesus asked His disciples, "Are you able...to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" (Mark 10:38)....His death was the real Jordan River. In suffering death, He crossed the river and entered into the region that is full of God's expression, full of God's glory.

By suffering death on the cross, Christ made propitiation for our sins (Heb. 2:17). This means that He appeased God for us. He has appeased God's righteousness and all of God's requirements on us. He has settled every problem between us and God.

By His death on the cross Christ has not only tasted death for us and made propitiation for our sins but also has destroyed the devil who has the might of death (2:14). He has abolished death. He has solved the problem of our sins. He has also spoiled the devil. So He is qualified to be a merciful High Priest.

Christ has also released us from the slavery of death (2:15). We have been released by Him from the slavery of sin, from the slavery of the fear of death, and even from the slavery of death itself. No longer are we enslaved by anything.

A further qualification of Christ's being the High Priest is that in resurrection He has brought forth many brothers in order to form the church (2:10-12). He is the firstborn Son of God in resurrection, and we are His many brothers in resurrection to form the church. He and we are the same in life and in nature....He is the Head of the church, and we are the members of the church. This affords Him so much ground to be our High Priest.

Christ's being crowned with glory and honor in His exaltation is also a qualification of His priesthood. His exaltation, glory, and honor all afford Him the possibility of ministering to us as the High Priest. With such a position and possibility, He can be merciful and faithful as much as He likes. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 142-145)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msg. 13; CWWN, vol. 18, "The Sympathy of the High Priest," pp. 295-299

## « WEEK 5 — DAY 5 »

### Morning Nourishment

Heb. 4:14-16 Having therefore a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all respects like us, yet without sin. Let us therefore come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.

According to Hebrews 4:14, Jesus, the Son of God, is a “great High Priest.” The word great in this verse means “excellent, wonderful, glorious, and most honorable.” Christ is great in His person (1:5, 8; 2:6), work (1:3; 2:17, 9, 14-15, 10; 3:5-6; 4:8-9; Acts 2:24, 27), and attainment (Heb. 6:20; 9:24; 2:9).

First, our High Priest, Christ, is great in His person. He is the Son of God, God Himself (1:5, 8). He is also the Son of Man, man himself (2:6). He, being both God and man, has the divine nature and the human nature. He not only knows the things of God and the things of man; He also is in the things of God and the things of man. No other high priest has ever been like Him.

Our High Priest, Christ, is also great in His work. He has made purification of and propitiation for our sins (1:3; 2:17). He has taken away sin and has solved the problem of sin. He tasted death not only on behalf of every man but also on behalf of everything (v. 9).

Moreover, our High Priest, Christ, is great in His attainment. His attainment is so high that He entered into the Holy of Holies in the heavens and was crowned with glory and honor (6:20; 9:24; 2:9). (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3750-3751)

### Today's Reading

According to the Old Testament, whenever the high priest went into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, he bore upon his shoulders two onyx stones on which were engraved the names of the children of Israel (Exo. 28:9-12). He also wore the breastplate in which were set twelve precious stones engraved with the names of the children of Israel (vv. 15-30). This signifies that the people of Israel were on the shoulder and breast of the high priest. Since the shoulder signifies strength and the breast signifies love, the people of God were on the strength and in the love of the high priest. When the high priest was in the Holy of Holies, he brought all the people of God along with him. In the eyes of God, when he was there, all the people of God were there with him. Likewise, when God looks at Christ, our High Priest in the Holy of Holies, He sees us upon His shoulder and breast. Our High Priest in the Holy of Holies in the heavens bears us and wears us before God. Even now we are upon His shoulder and upon His breast in the Holy of Holies. We are there with Him in the shekinah glory of God.

As Christ bears us before God in the Holy of Holies, He ministers God into our being. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p.3748)

Coming forward to the throne of grace is absolutely a matter in our spirit. If we are in the mind, it will be difficult for us to enter into the Holy of Holies. If we are a soulish person staggering in the wilderness of our soul, we shall be far away from the Holy of Holies. Since our spirit is the place of God's habitation today, it is the gate of heaven where Christ is the ladder that joins us, the people on earth, to heaven, and brings heaven to us. Whenever we turn to our spirit, we enter into the gate of heaven and touch the throne of grace in heaven through Christ as the heavenly ladder. For this, we need the living word of God to pierce into the depths of our being and separate our spirit from our wandering mind. As long as we are in our spirit, we have the gate of heaven. Within the gate is the throne of grace. It takes no time whatever to enter into the Holy of Holies, because there is no distance between it and our spirit. Whenever we say from the depths of our being, “O Lord Jesus,” we are immediately in the Holy of Holies, touching the throne of grace. How we need to touch the throne of grace! (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 299-300)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msgs. 27, 35



## « WEEK 5 — DAY 6 »

### Morning Nourishment

Rom. 8:28-29 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

Although Christ as the High Priest is taking care of us, we all have our own thought and feeling as to how He should care for us....However, often the Lord's way of caring for us is different from what we desire....The Lord may not answer a prayer for healing. In His care for a certain one, He may allow that one to die of his illness. We do not know what is good for us, but the Lord knows. He knows what is needed for our life on earth.

Nevertheless, I can say this: the Lord's care for us is always positive. One day we shall see Him and worship Him. Some of us may say to Him, "Lord Jesus, forgive me for complaining to You about my situation. Now I know that God's will for me is good." Our High Priest is taking good care of us all. (Life-study of Luke, pp. 670-671)

### Today's Reading

When the apostle Paul prayed to the Lord, asking Him to remove the thorn (2 Cor. 12:7-8), the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness" (v. 9). Instead of removing that thorn, the Lord imparted Himself into Paul as grace, enabling the apostle to know how precious and sufficient He is. This experience of Christ as our High Priest who bears us on His shoulder and breast and ministers God into us is an experience in the Holy of Holies, where we enjoy God Himself and all His riches. When we enter into this experience, it is difficult to say where we are or what is happening. We can only say that we are upon the shoulders and breast of our High Priest and that He is ministering something comforting and strengthening into us. This experience of Christ as our High Priest is the highest experience and enjoyment. We all must learn to stay here on His shoulders and on His breast in the Holy of Holies. We should not be content to remain as outer-court Christians; neither should we be Christians staggering in the Holy Place. We must press on into the Holy of Holies, where God's presence and shekinah glory are. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3748-3749)

First Kings 8:31-48 mentions seven conditions concerning God's listening to the prayers of His elect. In...the last condition three things are stressed (v. 48): the Holy Land, typifying Christ as the portion allotted by God to the believers (see footnote 1 on Deut. 8:7); the holy city, signifying the kingdom of God in Christ (Psa. 48:1-2); and the holy temple, signifying God's house, the church, on the earth (Eph. 2:21; 1 Tim. 3:15). These are the three crucial things regarding God's economy. During the Babylonian captivity Daniel prayed toward the Holy Land, the holy city, and the holy temple three times a day by opening his window toward Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10). This indicates that God will listen to our prayer when our prayer to God is toward Christ, the kingdom of God, and the house of God as the goal in God's eternal economy. This means that no matter for whom we are praying, our prayers should be aimed at the interests of God, that is, at Christ and the church as God's interests on earth, for the fulfilling of God's economy. (1 Kings 8:48, footnote 1)

The ascended Christ cares not only for us and our welfare: He cares for God's desires. This High Priest cares more for God's need than for our need. God wants lampstands. Therefore, the Lord establishes lampstands and trims the lamps for the expression of God (Rev. 1:13; 2:1). This work includes His edifying of the saints and His building up of the church.

Christ's ministry as the High Priest in the heavens has a destination—the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be the consummation of Christ's work in His ascension. Whatever Christ is now working in His ascension will consummate in the coming New Jerusalem. (Life-study of Luke, pp. 671-673)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 372, 374-375; Life-study of Luke, msg. 79



## « WEEK 5 — HYMN

### Hymns, #193

1

Dear Lord, Thou art so much to us  
Thou art our all in all;  
What Thou art fully meets our needs,  
Though they be great or small.  
Our hearts appreciate what Thou art,  
Our spirits worship Thee;  
Our grateful praise to Thee we give  
As we Thy riches see.

2

Thou art the Prophet raised by God,  
With pow'r for God to speak;  
Like Moses, Thou God's plan hast shown,  
That we God's will may seek.  
Thou art like Jonah sent by God,  
To enter death and live,  
That by this sign of death and life,  
We may in Thee believe.

4

Thou art the Priest from us to God,  
The holy Priest for us,  
Like Aaron called of God from men,  
For us Thou servest thus.  
In love Thou bearest us to God,  
The great High Priest to serve;  
With love Thou intercedest there  
And dost with strength preserve.

5

Thou art the Priest from God to us,  
The royal Priest of God;  
Like Salem's King, Melchizedek,  
The minister of God.  
With bread and wine Thou cam'st from God  
To us in time of need;  
Thou cam'st with God that we in Him  
Might fully share indeed.

6

Thou art the King as David was,  
And God's desire dost seek;  
The battle fought, the foe subdued,  
God's heart Thou dost bespeak.  
Thou art empowered on the throne,  
Not with a human rod,  
But with authority divine  
To reign for us and God.

7

Thou art the King like Solomon,  
Whose rule with peace was filled;  
With wisdom Thou dost reign in pow'r  
And Thou God's house dost build.  
As King unseen Thou reignest now  
Among Thy saints with love;  
One day, when Thou shalt reign with us,  
Thou wilt Thy kingship prove.

8

As King and Priest and Prophet too,  
How precious, Lord, art Thou;  
Thy worth to God, Thy worth to us,  
We all with love avow.  
O how we treasure what Thou art,  
Our hearts are drawn by Thee;  
To Thee we'll give our thanks and praise  
Throughout eternity.

# WEEK 6 — OUTLINE

## Responding to Christ's Intercession in His Heavenly Ministry

Scripture Reading: Heb. 7:25-26; Rom. 8:26-27, 34; Col. 1:9-11; 4:12

### << DAY 1 >>

#### I. Christ as the kingly and divine High Priest is interceding for us (Heb. 7:25-26):

- A. Christ has been constituted our High Priest according to the power of an indestructible life (v. 16), which nothing can dissolve; this is an endless life, being the eternal, divine, uncreated life and the resurrection life that has passed through the test of death and of Hades (Acts 2:24; Rev. 1:18).
- B. Because Christ lives forever without any change, He is able to save us to the uttermost in extent, time, and space (Heb. 7:24-25).
- C. In Hebrews 7:25 the expression to the uttermost means “completely, entirely, perfectly, to the end, and for eternity”; this indicates that Christ as our High Priest is able to save us to the fullest extent, that is, to save in every kind of situation and condition.

### << DAY 2 >>

- D. Christ is able to save us completely because He is interceding for us; He is our perpetual, constant, and eternal Intercessor (vv. 25-26):
  - 1. God has appointed Him to take care of us, and He is now caring for us by interceding for us; He is interceding for us now, and He will save us to the uttermost.
  - 2. He appears before God on our behalf, praying that we may be wholly saved and brought fully into God's eternal purpose (9:24; Eph. 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9).
  - 3. Christ intercedes for us constantly, and eventually His intercession will overcome, subdue, and save us; we all will be completely saved by His intercession; His salvation reaches to the uttermost.
  - 4. We should believe that Christ is always interceding for us and come forward to God through Him (Heb. 7:25).
  - 5. Christ can save us to the uttermost because He is living not only in the heavens but also in us (Col. 3:1; 1:27; Rom. 8:34, 10):
    - a. While He is living in the heavens, He is transmitting Himself into us (Eph. 1:22-23).
    - b. He is living in the heavens to intercede for us and take care of our case, but the reality of this is transmitted into our spirit by His Spirit.
    - c. We must learn to see this heavenly vision and enjoy our High Priest; then we

will receive mercy and find grace at the throne of grace for timely help (Heb. 4:14-16).

### « DAY 3 »

## II. In Romans 8 Christ is interceding for us at the right hand of God, and the Spirit is interceding for us in our spirit (vv. 34, 26-27):

A. Christ died for us, He was resurrected, and now He is in the heavens at the right hand of God interceding for us (v. 34):

1. Our Christ today is in the highest heaven, holding the highest position at God's right hand (Heb. 8:1).
2. Christ is interceding for our glorification; this corresponds to His interceding for us to be saved to the uttermost (7:25-26).
3. As the consummated and ascended God-man and as the Head of the Body, Christ is interceding for us that we, the many God-men, could overcome opposition and all kinds of circumstances and be kept in union with Him in His unconditional love so that we may be conformed to His image as the firstborn Son of God and thus become His reproduction for the constitution of the corporate and organic Body of Christ (Rom. 8:29, 34-39; 12:4-5).

### « DAY 4 »

B. "The Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (8:26):

1. The weakness here is our ignorance of how we should pray; we do not know the kind of prayer God desires, and we are not clear how to pray.
2. In our groaning the Spirit groans also, interceding for us; His interceding is mainly that we may experience the transformation in life for growth in life unto the maturity of sonship so that we may be fully conformed to the image of God's firstborn Son (12:2; 8:29).

C. "He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God" (v. 27):

1. The mind of the Spirit here is not the mind of the Spirit that is independent of us; it is the mind of the Spirit that has been mingled with our mind and has become part of our heart (v. 6).
2. The Spirit has not only mingled Himself with our spirit (v. 16); He has also mingled His mind with our mind.
3. The searching Spirit prays for us according to God Himself, that we may be conformed to the image of His Son (v. 29).

## « DAY 5 »

### III. We need to respond to Christ's intercession in His heavenly ministry (Heb. 7:25-26; Rom. 8:34; Acts 12:5; Col. 1:9-11; 4:12):

- A. Christ's intercession requires our response; we need to participate in Christ's interceding life and become on earth the reflection of Christ's intercession in His heavenly ministry, praying the prayers of the interceding Christ (Rom. 8:26-27, 34; 1 Tim. 2:1; Col. 4:3; 1 Thes. 5:25; 2 Thes. 3:1; Heb. 13:18).
- B. Through our prayer Christ, the Head, is given a way to carry out His administration through His Body (Rev. 5:6; 8:3-5; Eph. 1:10, 17-23).
- C. In Acts 12 we have the intercessory prayer of the church, and in Colossians 1:9-11 and 4:12, the intercessory prayers of Paul and Epaphras:
  - 1. When Peter was in prison, "prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him" (Acts 12:5):
    - a. Behind the scene there was a battle of spiritual forces, a battle between God and His enemy, Satan (vv. 4-6).
    - b. By prayer the church fought the battle with God against Satan, the evil one (vv. 5-23).
  - 2. Paul prayed that the saints would "be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col. 1:9):
    - a. Here the will of God concerns the all-inclusive Christ as our portion (v. 12).

## « DAY 6 »

- b. The will of God is profound in relation to our knowing, experiencing, and living the all-inclusive Christ; God's will for us is that we know Christ, experience Christ, enjoy Christ, live Christ, and have Christ become our life and our person (Phil. 3:7-10; 1:21a; Col. 3:4; Eph. 3:17a).
- 3. Epaphras struggled on behalf of the saints in his prayers that they would stand mature and be fully assured in all the will of God (Col. 4:12).
- D. The position of prayer is ascension, that is, a heavenly position (Eph. 1:3; 2:6):
  - 1. If we leave the heavenly position, we lose the position of prayer.
  - 2. With the position of prayer there is the authority of prayer; as the position of prayer is ascension, the authority of prayer is also ascension (Matt. 17:20; 18:18-19).
  - 3. When we have the heavenly position and authority, our prayers become God's administration, the execution of God's will (6:10; Eph. 2:6; 6:18).

# « WEEK 6 — DAY 1 »

## Morning Nourishment

Heb. 7:25-26 Hence also He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for them. For such a High Priest was also fitting to us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners and having become higher than the heavens.

The salvation that Christ will bring to us in His second coming will be such a wider and higher one and will fulfill the final and ultimate goal of God's all-inclusive salvation in Christ....His more excellent ministry in the heavens today, the ministry of His kingly and divine priesthood with His heavenly intercession, is building up such a salvation. When He sees that the building up of this wonderful salvation has been accomplished, He will appear the second time. That will be His second manifestation in God's economy. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 3787)

## Today's Reading

Christ has not been constituted the High Priest according to the powerless letters of the law but according to the powerful element of an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16). Nothing can dissolve this life. It is an endless life, being the eternal, divine, uncreated, resurrection life that has passed through the test of death and Hades (Acts 2:24; Rev. 1:18). It is by such a life that Christ ministers today as our High Priest. Hence, He is able to save us to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25). Christ as our High Priest is the living Son of God Himself. As the powerful One, Christ is simultaneously both in heaven and in our spirit. Between these two ends, heaven and our spirit, there is the traffic on the heavenly ladder because His priesthood is continually flowing from the throne into our spirit. It does not flow with knowledge but with the power of an indestructible life.

In Christ, our High Priest, not only is there no worldliness or sin, but there is absolutely no death. Death has been completely swallowed up by His divine life....Death cannot prevent Him from continuing as the High Priest. All of the Levitical priests lived until a certain age and then died. Death prevented them from continuing as priests....Not only were those priests unable to save others; they were unable to save even themselves. Christ's priesthood is different. While the Aaronic priesthood was still subject to death, the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek, constituted with the element of life, is the absence of death. The life with which it is constituted has passed through death and has swallowed up death. This life is indestructible.

We know that this life is indestructible because it has been tested by everything and by every kind of situation. It was tested by the Lord's mother in the flesh, by all the members of His fleshly family, by all the sufferings of His human life, and by all the temptations of the devil, Satan. Ultimately, it was tested by death, the grave, Hades, and the power of darkness. This life has been tested by everything, and nothing can destroy it. It is absolutely indestructible. Our High Priest is constituted with the element of such an indestructible life.

As our High Priest, Christ takes care of us with His indestructible life. In His indestructible, eternal life we participate and enjoy Him as our High Priest.

Hebrews 7:25 tells us that our High Priest is able to save us to the uttermost. The Greek word translated "uttermost" also means "completely, entirely, perfectly, for all time and eternity and to the end." Because Christ lives forever, He is able to save us to the uttermost in extent, time, and space.

Christ as our High Priest is able to save to the fullest extent, that is, to save in every kind of situation and condition.

He is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to God through Him, since He lives always to intercede for us. Christ as our High Priest undertakes our case by interceding for us. He appears before God on our behalf and prays for us that we may be saved and brought fully into God's eternal purpose. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3760-3761, 607, 3777)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 373; CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, "The Heavenly Ministry of Christ," ch. 7



## « WEEK 6 — DAY 2 »

### Morning Nourishment

Heb. 9:24 For Christ did not enter into a holy place made by hands, a figure of the true, but into heaven itself, to appear now before the face of God for us.

2 Tim. 1:9 Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the times of the ages.

Christ is able to save us because He intercedes for us (Heb. 7:25b). As our High Priest, Christ undertakes our case by interceding for us. He appears before God on our behalf, praying for us that we may be saved and brought fully into God's eternal purpose. **We need to simply rest in His intercession, trust in it, and enjoy it. Be assured that our divine High Priest is continually interceding for us....We have a perpetual, constant, and eternal Intercessor.** (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 3782)

### Today's Reading

Our divine High Priest intercedes for us constantly, knowing how easy it is for us to fall and, once we have fallen, to remain in our fallen state. Sooner or later His intercession will overcome, subdue, and save us....God appointed Him to take care of us, and He is now taking care of us by interceding for us. Although we may forget that we have called upon His name, He will never forget it. He is interceding for us, and He will save us to the uttermost.

Since we have such a High Priest interceding for us, we should "come forward with boldness to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help" (Heb. 4:16). We need to keep coming forward to God. Morning and evening, day and night, we should come forward to Him, saying to Him, "I am open to You. You are rich. I need You. I want to stay open to You all the time."

**We should believe that Christ is always interceding for us.** By interceding for us, He takes care of us. He can take care of us much better than we could ever take care of ourselves. Most of the time we are foolish in the way that we care for ourselves. Instead of trying to take care of ourselves by our own efforts, we should simply give ourselves to Him and rest, knowing that He is always caring for us.

Christ can save us to the uttermost because He is living not only in the heavens but also within us. While He is living in the heavens, He is transmitting Himself into us. He is living in the heavens to intercede for us and take care of our case, but the reality of this is transmitted into our spirit by His Spirit. We must learn to see this heavenly vision and enjoy our High Priest. Then we will receive mercy and find grace at the throne of grace for timely help. We will be delivered and saved to the uttermost. This is the work of our divine High Priest.

**Because He has this kind of priesthood, He is able to save us to the uttermost. If we are not saved to the uttermost, it does not mean that He is not able to save. Rather, it means that we were not willing to be saved. We have no excuse. If we are willing to be saved, surely He will save us to the uttermost.** (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3782, 3777-3778)

In Romans 8:34 Paul asks, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."...He died for us, was resurrected, and is now in the heavens interceding for us. His heavenly ministry is to take care of us.

Many times we have been reminded, comforted, strengthened, and even carried by Him....There is something within and something from above that strengthens, sustains, comforts, and enlightens us. Without this support from our High Priest's intercession, we would long since have been gone. **We have been preserved not by ourselves, but by our High Priest.**

We really do not need much help from the outside. We have a Helper in the heavenlies. Our help comes from the heavens to our spirit. Eventually, the help comes from within. We have such a High Priest. (The Heavenly Ministry of Christ, p. 56)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 375; Life-study of Hebrews, msgs. 32, 35

## « WEEK 6 — DAY 3 »

### Morning Nourishment

Rom. 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died and, rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

Heb. 8:1 Now in the things which are being said the chief point is this: We have such a High Priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

Romans 8:34 tells us that Christ died for us and that after being raised, He is interceding for us at the right hand of God. This verse states that Christ today is at the right hand of God in the heavens; verse 10, however, states that He is now in us, in our spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). As the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17), He is omnipresent, being both at the right hand of God and in our spirit, both in heaven and on earth. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 3083)

### Today's Reading

In Romans 8:34 it is Christ who intercedes for us, yet in verse 26 it is the Spirit who intercedes for us. These are not two Intercessors but one, the Lord Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). He is interceding for us at two ends. At one end it is the Spirit in us, probably initiating the intercession for us; at the other end it is the Lord Christ at the right hand of God, probably completing the intercession for us, which must be mainly that we will be conformed to His image and brought into His glory.

Christ died for us, He was resurrected, and He is now in the heavens at the right hand of God interceding for us. In ascension Christ is at the right hand of God. "The right hand of God" signifies preeminence, the first place of honor. The right hand of God is the first and highest place in the universe, and God has put the ascended Christ there. God has given the preeminence and the highest honor in the entire universe to Christ. Our Christ today is in the highest heaven, holding the highest position at God's right hand. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3083, 336)

When this standard model was resurrected, being born in His humanity to be the firstborn Son of God, He included us (1 Pet. 1:3). When He was sonized in His humanity, in His resurrection, we were born as sons of God. We need to forget time. There is no clock in heaven, and there will be no watches in eternity. Although we may not be able to understand this, we should simply accept it. According to the pure word of the Holy Bible, when Christ was resurrected, He imparted Himself into us as life, and we were reborn. After imparting Himself into us as life, Christ entered into perfection, into glory, where He is now interceding for our glorification.

Christ is interceding for us to be saved to the uttermost. Although I have heard many messages saying that Christ is interceding for us, I have not heard one message which said that Christ is interceding for us to be brought into perfection. Many pastors use Romans 8:34 and Hebrews 7:25 concerning Christ's interceding to comfort those who are in difficulty. But Christ is not interceding merely for us to have comfort. Such a concept of His intercession is too low. Christ is interceding for us to be glorified and to be saved into His perfection. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 430)

He, as the ascended Lord of all, as the consummated and ascended God-man and as the Head of the Body, intercedes at the right hand of God in the heavens for us that we, His many brothers and members, who are the many God-men, could overcome the oppositions and any kind of circumstances and be kept in union with Him in His unconditional love, so that we may be conformed to the image of Him, the firstborn Son of God, as the prototype, to be His consummated mass reproduction for the constitution of His corporate and organic Body (Rom. 8:29-39). Christ has different statuses. In the status of the pneumatic Christ, He intercedes within us in the heavenlies. In the status of the ascended Lord, He is interceding for us in the heavens, not in the heavenlies. **He intercedes for us so that we may overcome everything in our surroundings. If God is for us, who can defeat us? According to Romans 8:29-39, nothing can defeat us, and we can overcome.** (Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans, pp. 25-26)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msgs. 37-38

## ◀ WEEK 6 — DAY 4 ▶

### Morning Nourishment

Rom. 8:26-27 Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. But He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God.

At times we may have some burden and some feeling, but we do not know how to utter them. We have no knowledge about how to utter our prayer. Thus, all we can do is groan and say, “O Lord Jesus. O Lord Jesus.”

In Romans 8:26 Paul said, “Moreover, in like manner the Spirit also joins in to help us in our weakness, for we do not know for what we should pray as is fitting, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” The weakness here is our ignorance of how we should pray. We do not know the kind of prayer God desires, and we are not clear how to pray, according to the burden we feel, for our being conformed to the image of God’s Son; hence, we groan (v. 23). In our groaning the Spirit groans also, interceding for us. His interceding is mainly that we may experience the transformation in life for growth into the maturity of sonship that we may be fully conformed to the image of God’s Son (v. 29). (Life-study of the Psalms, p. 216)

### Today’s Reading

As the Spirit works in the believers by helping them in their weakness and by interceding for them with groanings, He infuses His according-to-God mind into them in their prayer. “He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to God” (Rom. 8:27). Whereas Ephesians 4:23 speaks of the spirit of the mind, this verse speaks of the mind of the Spirit. The spirit of the mind is for renewing, and the mind of the Spirit is for interceding.

Actually, it is difficult to say to whose mind Paul is referring in Romans 8:27, because the Spirit is mingled with our spirit and the Spirit is interceding within us. In our groaning there is the groaning of the Spirit. The Spirit groans in our groaning. We may even say that it is the Spirit’s groaning groaned by us, expressed by us. Thus, it is actually our groaning. In the same principle, in verse 27 we have the Spirit’s mind, but now the Spirit’s mind is one with our mind because our mind is set on the spirit (v. 6).

It is not merely the Spirit’s mind; it is the Spirit’s mind mingled with our mind. Our mind is set on the spirit, making our mind one with the mind of the Spirit.

Romans 8:27 says that He who searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit. Whose heart is mentioned here? Surely this is not the heart of the Spirit; this must be our heart. God searches our hearts, yet He knows what is the mind of the Spirit. This proves that the mind here is not the independent mind of the Spirit; it is the mind of the Spirit mingled with our mind and becoming a part of our heart. It is our heart and the Spirit’s mind. God searching our heart knows the mind of the Spirit. This indicates that our mind is one with the Spirit. The Spirit’s mind is one with our mind, and our mingled mind even becomes a part of our heart. The New Testament revelation gives us a clear view of such a mingling. Our mind can be set on the spirit, making our mind one with the Spirit. Hence, the Spirit’s mind is one with our mind, and this mingled heart, this mingled mind, becomes a part of our spirit. Now when we groan, our groaning is not a religious prayer but an aspiration from the depths of our being, where the mingling of divinity with humanity is. This is the result of the Spirit’s work of infusing His according-to-God mind into us. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 989-990)

The interceding Spirit prays for us not according to something of God but according to God Himself, that we may be conformed to the image of God’s Son. (Rom. 8:27, footnote 2)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 92; Life-study of Romans, msg. 21

## « WEEK 6 — DAY 5 »

### Morning Nourishment

Acts 12:5 So then Peter was kept in the prison; but prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him.

Col. 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a slave of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God.

Christ's ministry in heaven is for the goal of building up the Body and forming His bride. However, Christ's ministry in heaven requires our response. We need to become on earth the reflection of that heavenly ministry. When we seek the things above, we respond to the Lord's heavenly ministry and reflect it....We will sense a current flowing back and forth between Him and us. By means of this kind of prayer, the divine riches are transfused into us. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3609-3610)

### Today's Reading

In Revelation 8 Christ is...depicted as another Angel, offering the prayers of the saints to God (vv. 3-5). For His administration He needs our prayers. Our prayers are the response to His heavenly ministry. As we pray, He administers. As He administers, we are praying. These prayers He offers to God, then pours out God's answers to them on this earth. This is the meaning of verse 5: "The Angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth; and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake." The pouring out of God's answers to our prayers is equivalent to His universal administration. This Administrator is qualified in every way, yet He needs our prayers. We may say that Christ is administering this whole universe through our prayers. (CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, "The Heavenly Ministry of Christ," p. 134)

Prayer is the only way to have our mind set on the things in heaven. When we set our mind on things above by praying, we will not pray for trivial matters. Instead our prayer will be occupied with Christ's heavenly intercession, ministry, and administration. Because Christ is interceding for the churches around the world, we also pray for the churches. We should let the Lord take care of all the small matters in our living. Our responsibility is to seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Since the Father knows our need, He will take care of us and meet our need.

When we set our mind on the things which are above during our times of prayer, we become a reflection of Christ's ministry in the heavens. Through our prayer, Christ, the Head, is given a way to carry out His administration through His Body. When we pray, we are a heavenly ambassador on earth as the extension of God's kingdom. However, when we are gossiping, we are not a heavenly ambassador at all. Only when we pray do we become an ambassador of the heavenly kingdom on earth in a practical way. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 3609)

When Peter was in prison, "prayer was being made fervently by the church to God concerning him" (Acts 12:5). This indicates that behind the scene there was a battle between spiritual forces, a battle between God and His enemy, Satan. Apparently the conflict was between Herod and Peter; actually it was between God and His enemy. No doubt, Herod was instigated by Satan. Satan was behind him and even within him. Therefore, the church fought the battle with God against Satan, the evil one.

This battle was fought not by the flesh but by prayer. The church prayed, and the weapon used by the church to defeat Herod and the spiritual force behind him was not of the flesh but of the Spirit. (Life-study of Acts, p. 293)

Colossians 1:9 says, "Therefore we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease praying and asking on your behalf that you may be filled with the full knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." God's will here refers to the will of His eternal purpose, of His economy concerning Christ (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11), not His will in minor things. (Life-study of Colossians, p. 19)

Further Reading: Life-study of Colossians, msgs. 60-61

## ◀ WEEK 6 — DAY 6 ▶

### Morning Nourishment

Matt. 17:20 ...For truly I say to you, If you have faith like a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.

18:19 Again, truly I say to you that if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it will be done for them from My Father who is in the heavens.

The will of God is profound in relation to our knowing, experiencing, and living the all-inclusive Christ. In Colossians 1:9 Paul was not praying that the Colossians would know whom to marry, where to live, or what kind of job they should have. His heart was not occupied with such trivial things. In this verse God's will refers to Christ. It was not God's will for the Colossians to follow Judaistic observances, Gentile ordinances, or human philosophies. Furthermore, it was not God's will for them to practice asceticism, to treat the body severely in order to bridle the indulgence of the flesh. God's will for the Colossians was to know Christ, to experience Christ, to enjoy Christ, to live Christ, and to have Christ become their life and their person. God's will for us today is exactly the same. It seems as if Paul was saying, "Colossians, you...need to be filled with the full knowledge of God's will. God's will is that the all-inclusive Christ be your portion." (Life-study of Colossians, p. 20)

### Today's Reading

In the first chapter of Colossians the apostle Paul and his co-workers prayed that the Colossians would know the will of God [v. 9], and in the last chapter Epaphras as a slave of Christ struggled fervently in prayer on behalf of the church concerning the same thing [4:12]. Therefore, this is a book which reveals to us the eternal will of God in the universe. We must keep these two verses in mind. (CWWL, 1964, vol. 2, "A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church, Part 2—Romans through Philemon," p. 328)

The position of prayer is the position of ascension. You can only pray in the heavenly sphere. Whenever you leave the heavenly realm, you lose the position of prayer. You may pray, but that prayer does not count before God.

The position of prayer is entirely a heavenly position. You cannot have a bit of jealousy, spite, or anger toward others. Once these things are found in your prayers, immediately you are not in the heavenly realm. You are not burning the incense in the Holy Place....Hence, we have said that you may be able to do and say things freely at all times and on all occasions, except while in prayer. Prayer is not only a holy ground, but even more, it is a spiritual realm. The position of prayer is heavenly. Once you leave the heavenly sphere you lose the position of prayer.

As the position of prayer is ascension, the authority of prayer is also ascension. With the position of prayer there is the authority of prayer. Whatever a Christian does is not only a matter of power, but even more, a matter of authority. For example, when preaching the Word you need not only power but also authority. This is true of some who pray before God. They not only have power but also authority, for they are in the heavenly position.

If you really wish to have some worthwhile prayers before God, you need to be able to give out some authoritative commands before God. Standing before God, I can tell you that in the past years in some places, as we encountered some problems in the work or in the church, we prayed this kind of commanding prayer. We expressed ourselves boldly before God, saying, "God, we cannot allow this matter." If your position is wrong and your condition is not in the heavenly realm, such prayer would be an insult to God. But if your position is right and your state is in the heavenly sphere, then such prayer would be a real pleasure to Him. The words you pray are equal to God's administration; they are equivalent to executing His commands. I can testify that God answers such prayers. (Lessons on Prayer, pp. 197, 199-200, 202)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msgs. 76-77; Lessons on Prayer, ch. 17



## « WEEK 6 — HYMN

### Hymns, #1130

1

Sing praise to Christ who lives in us,  
The God of our salvation;  
Who saves us by His life divine,  
And not by regulation;  
After we've worked—done all we can,  
His life has power to change a man:  
His life divine can change us.

2

He saves us to the uttermost  
By His life-giving power;  
Transfusing Himself into us,  
He saves us hour by hour.  
He saved the lost by coming in,  
He's saving now from more than sin:  
He's saving us to glory!

3

Our Lord was constituted priest  
To be a real life-giver;  
Life is the nature of this One  
Who can from self deliver:  
His life is indestructible,  
By it He saves us to the full:  
Praise God, He's fully able!

4

His life is fully qualified  
To bring us through to glory;  
Were it not for His tested life,  
'Twould be another story:  
His life was fully tried on earth,  
To crucifixion from His birth:  
He passed through death and Hades.

5

He's pledged to save us to the full,  
His life is operating;  
He's doing everything for us



'Tis all for our perfecting;  
Our life's a failure at its best,  
Only His life can stand the test:  
His life brings full salvation!

6

He's living now to intercede,  
Continuing forever;  
He undertakes into the age,  
His priesthood changes never;  
He always lives to intercede,  
Such a High Priest is what we need:  
He's higher than the heavens.

7

Come forward now to God through Him,  
Ne'er shrink back to destruction;  
Come forward now to get the life,  
Which brings the proper function;  
Come forward now the life to take,  
By life His people us He'll make,  
And swallow death forever.

## WEEK 7 — OUTLINE

### Practicing the Church Life under the Ministry of Christ as the Minister of the True, the Heavenly, Tabernacle

Scripture Reading: Heb. 8:2, 6; 2:10-12; 1:9; 3:6; 4:9; 7:22; 9:15; 12:22-24, 28; 13:1-19

#### « DAY 1 »

#### I. The ascended Christ is a “Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle” (Heb. 8:2):

- A. Christ, as a Minister of the true (heavenly) tabernacle, ministers heaven (which is not only a place but also a condition of life) into us.
- B. The present Christ, who is now in the heavens as our Minister, is ministering to us the heavenly life, grace, authority, and power and sustaining us to live a heavenly life on earth as He did when He was here (1:3; 4:14; 7:26; 9:24).
- C. The heavenly Christ is ministering in the tabernacle “which the Lord pitched, not man” (8:2):
  - 1. This tabernacle, this sanctuary, is in the third heaven, in which is the heavenly Holy of Holies.
  - 2. The heavenly Holy of Holies, where Christ is ministering on our behalf, is connected to our spirit (4:12).
  - 3. Christ’s ministry in the heavens takes care of our needs (v. 15):
    - a. From the heavens Christ ministers Himself to us as food, as our life supply, in the way of dispensing.
    - b. As our Minister takes care of our needs, He carries out God’s economy (Eph. 1:10).
- D. Whatever Christ carries out as the heavenly Minister, He applies to us as the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17):
  - 1. The supply we need comes from the Christ who is both the Lord in the heavens and the Spirit within us (Acts 2:36; Rom. 8:11).
  - 2. Now we may experience Him in all His functions as the ascended One (Heb. 1:3; 9:24; 12:2).
  - 3. As the heavenly Minister, He transmits what we need from God the Father, who is the source, into our spirit to supply and sustain us.

#### « DAY 2 »

- E. In His heavenly ministry as the Minister of the true tabernacle, Christ is serving God’s people with the bequests, the blessings, of the new testament (7:22; 8:6; 9:15):

1.As our heavenly Minister with a more excellent ministry, Christ is carrying out the better covenant (7:22):

a.He does this by making the facts of the new covenant effective.

b.Every fact in the new covenant is made effective by the heavenly Minister with His more excellent ministry (9:15; 8:6).

2.Whatever is a fact in the new covenant is a bequest in the new testament; Christ, the heavenly Minister, is executing the bequests in the new testament (9:15-17; 10:16-18).

## II. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, various aspects of the church are revealed:

A.The church is a living composition of the many sons of God, who are the many brothers of Christ brought forth in His resurrection (2:10-12; Rom. 8:29; John 20:17; Heb. 1:5; 5:5; Acts 13:33; 1 Pet. 1:3):

1.God is our divine Father, and we are His divine sons born of His divine life with His divine nature (John 20:17; Eph. 1:5; Gal. 3:26; John 1:12-13; 2 Pet. 1:4).

2.As the many brothers of Christ, we are the same as the firstborn Son; He is divine and human, and we are human and divine (Heb. 2:11; 1:6; Rom. 8:29).

### « DAY 3 »

3.The church is an organism with two lives and two natures combined and mingled together (Lev. 2:1-16):

a.The church is altogether a matter of life—the divine life and the uplifted, resurrected human life (Rom. 1:3-4).

b.The church has two natures—the human nature and the divine nature; thus, the church is both human and divine (Heb. 2:14, 11).

### « DAY 4 »

B.The church is a corporate partnership with Christ (3:14; 1:9):

1.The goal of God's operation in the universe is to accomplish a glorious expression of Himself (2:10; John 17:1, 5, 22, 24; Rev. 21:10-11).

2.The firstborn Son is God's appointed Heir, and we, the many sons, have been saved to be His joint heirs, inheriting not only salvation but also all things with Him (Heb. 1:14; Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7; Eph. 3:6; Titus 3:7).

3.Since Christ as the firstborn Son of God is God's appointed Heir and we as the many sons of God are His joint heirs, we are Christ's partners (Heb. 1:9; 3:14).

4.As Christ's partners, we share in His anointing and cooperate with Him in His operation to reach the goal of God's economy—the glorious expression

of the Divine Being (1:9; 2 Cor. 1:21; Rev. 21:10-11).

## « DAY 5 »

C. The church, the enlargement of Christ, is the Sabbath rest (John 2:19, 21; 3:29a, 30; 1 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 3:6; 4:9):

1. The individual Christ is God's Sabbath (Matt. 11:28-29), and the church is the enlargement of Christ; therefore, the church is also God's Sabbath rest.
2. The church is God's satisfaction and rest because in the church God has His habitation for His expression and representation (Eph. 2:22).

D. To come to the church is to come to the new covenant and to the heavenly New Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22-24; 8:7-13; 11:10, 16; Gal. 4:24-26):

1. The new covenant, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the church are one.
2. To receive the new covenant is to enter the New Jerusalem and come to the church:
  - a. Hebrews 8 indicates that the old covenant of law has been replaced by the new covenant.
  - b. Hebrews 12 says that we have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the church (vv. 22-24).

E. The church is the unshakable kingdom of God (v. 28):

1. The unshakable kingdom that we are receiving is Christ with His enlargement:
  - a. The kingdom is actually the Lord Himself as the kingdom within us (Luke 17:20-21; Mark 4:3, 26).
  - b. Whereas the church is Christ's increase in life, the kingdom is Christ's increase in administration.
2. In the church, we are living in the kingdom of God today (John 3:3, 5; Rom. 14:17; Rev. 1:9).

## « DAY 6 »

### III. Hebrews 13:1-19 speaks of the virtues and the experiences needed for the practice of the church life:

- A. As indicated by its content, this chapter was written with a view to a proper church life; nearly everything mentioned here, such as brotherly love and hospitality, is for the church life, not only for the Christian life (vv. 1-7, 16-18).
- B. For a true and steadfast church life, we must hold on to the Christ who is the same yesterday and today, and even forever, and must not be carried away by various strange teachings (vv. 8-9).
- C. The more we are in our spirit, enjoying the heavenly Christ, the more we will come outside the camp of religion, following the suffering Jesus (vv. 12-14).

- D. Since in the church life we enjoy the unchanging Christ as grace and follow Him outside religion, we should offer through Him spiritual sacrifices of praise to God (v. 15):
1. In the church we should offer up through Christ a sacrifice of praise to God continually.
  2. In the church He sings in us hymns of praise unto God the Father (2:12), and in the church we too should praise God the Father through Him.
  3. Eventually, in the church He and we, we and He, praise the Father together in the mingled spirit (v. 12; 13:15):
    - a. He, as the life-giving Spirit, praises the Father in our spirit, and we, by our spirit, praise the Father in His Spirit.
    - b. This is the best and highest sacrifice that we can offer to God through Christ the Son.
    - c. This is greatly needed in the church meetings.

# « WEEK 7 — DAY 1 »

## Morning Nourishment

Heb. 8:2 A Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

9:24 For Christ did not enter into a holy place made by hands, a figure of the true, but into heaven itself, to appear now before the face of God for us.

Hebrews 8:2 says that the ascended Christ is a “Minister of the holy places, even of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.” Christ, as a Minister of the true (heavenly) tabernacle, ministers heaven (which is not only a place but also a condition of life) into us, so that we may have the heavenly life and power to live a heavenly life on earth as He did while He was here. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 347)

## Today's Reading

Hebrews, with the concept of all positive things being heavenly, points us to the very Christ who is in the heavens. In the Gospels is the Christ who lived on the earth and died on the cross for the accomplishment of redemption. In the Acts is the resurrected and ascended Christ propagated and ministered to man. In Romans is the Christ who is our righteousness for justification and our life for sanctification, transformation, conformation, glorification, and building up. In Galatians is the Christ for our living versus the law, religion, tradition, and forms. In Philippians is the Christ lived out of His members. In Ephesians and Colossians is the Christ who is the life, the content, and the Head of the Body, the church. In Corinthians is the Christ who is everything in the practical church life. In Thessalonians is the Christ who is our holiness for His coming back. In Timothy and Titus is the Christ who is God's economy for us to behave ourselves in the house of God. In the Epistles of Peter is the Christ who is for us to take God's governmental dealings through sufferings. In John's Epistles is the Christ who is the life and fellowship of the children of God in God's family. In Revelation is the Christ who is walking among the churches in this age, ruling over the world in the kingdom in the coming age, and expressed in full glory for eternity. In Hebrews is the present Christ who is now in the heavens as our Minister (8:2) and our High Priest (4:14-15; 7:26), ministering to us the heavenly life, grace, authority, and power, and sustaining us to live a heavenly life on earth. He **is the Christ now, the Christ today, and the Christ on the throne who is our daily salvation and moment-by-moment supply**. This is the Christ revealed in Hebrews. I love this description of Christ. I would do my best to influence you, impress you, and even compel you to love Him. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 12-13)

The heavenly Christ is ministering in a tabernacle pitched by the Lord and not by man. This tabernacle, this sanctuary, is in the third heaven, in which is the heavenly Holy of Holies. The heavenly Holy of Holies, where Christ is ministering on our behalf, is connected to our spirit. Christ's ministry in the heavens takes care of our need. From the heavens Christ ministers Himself to us as food, as our life supply, in the way of dispensing. **As our Minister takes care of our needs, He carries out God's economy.**

Whatever Christ carries out as the heavenly Minister, He applies to us as the Spirit. Whatever He ministers is transmitted into our spirit. Because the Lord in the heavens and the Spirit in our spirit are one, there is a **continual transmission** between the heavens and our spirit so that whatever takes place there is immediately applied here.

The supply we need comes from the Christ who is both the Lord in the heavens and the Spirit within us. He is interceding for us, caring for us. Now we may experience Him in all His functions as the ascended One. In particular, as the heavenly Minister He transmits what we need from God the Father, who is the source, into our spirit to supply and sustain us. This is the dispensing of the Triune God into our being. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 347)

Further Reading: CWWL, 1980, vol. 2, “The Heavenly Ministry of Christ,” ch. 9; Life-study of Hebrews, msg. 35



## « WEEK 7 — DAY 2 »

### Morning Nourishment

Rom. 8:29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.

Heb. 2:12 Saying, “I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You.”

In His heavenly ministry Christ is a Minister of the true, the heavenly, tabernacle (Heb. 8:2), serving God’s people with the bequests, the blessings, of the new testament. As our heavenly Minister with a more excellent ministry, Christ is carrying out the better covenant. He does this by making the facts of the new covenant effective. Every fact in the new covenant is made effective by the heavenly Minister with His more excellent ministry. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 826)

### Today’s Reading

Christ, the heavenly Minister, is also executing the bequests in the new testament. Whatever is a fact in the covenant is a bequest in the testament. Facts refer to certain things that have been accomplished but which are not yet designated until they are bequeathed. After the accomplished facts have been bequeathed, they immediately become bequests designated for us. Whatever is in a covenant is a fact, but whatever is in a testament is a bequest. What were facts in the covenant have now become legally designated for us as bequests in the testament. There are four facts of the new covenant which have become bequests in the new testament: the propitiation for unrighteousness and forgiveness of sins; the imparting of the law of life; the blessing of having God and of being His people; and the inward ability of knowing the Lord. In His work in His heavenly ministry Christ is now serving us with these bequests. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 826-827)

In the book of Hebrews all of the basic factors of the New Testament are implied in a deeper and yet very simple way. Apparently it is difficult for anyone to realize that the church is mentioned in the book of Hebrews. Although you might have read Hebrews a number of times, perhaps you have never been impressed with the mention of the church in this book. We are all familiar with the mention of the churches in Acts and in the other Epistles, but we may not have the impression that the church is found in Hebrews.

What is the church? The church is a corporate composition of the brothers of the firstborn Son of God. Do you still remember the difference between the only begotten Son of God and the firstborn Son of God? The only begotten Son of God had divinity without humanity. Although He had the divine nature, He did not have the human nature. But the firstborn Son of God has both the divine nature and the human nature. The brothers are not the brothers of the only begotten but the brothers of the firstborn Son of God. We are the same as the Firstborn. He is divine and human, and we are human and divine. The firstborn Son has humanity as well as divinity and all of His brothers are the same as He is....He is first divine and then human, and His brothers are first human and then divine. Eventually, He and we, we and He, are the same. We are wonderful people. We are not only human—we are also divine. Do you realize whose son you are? You are God’s son. God is our divine Father, and we all are His divine sons because we all have been born of His divine life with His divine nature. We are the many sons of the Father and the many brothers of the firstborn Son of the Father. This is not a dream. This is reality.

It is in such a profound way that the church is revealed in this book. The church is a living composition of all the sons of God, a living corporation of all the brothers of the firstborn Son of God.

As the many sons of God, we are the many brothers of Christ who is the firstborn Son of God. He was born to be the firstborn Son of God through His resurrection (Acts 13:33), and we have been produced to be His many brothers in His resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3). It was after His resurrection that He called His disciples His brothers (John 20:17). Our new birth was not a physical birth but a birth in resurrection. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 131-132, 134, 137)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msgs. 12, 56

## ◀ WEEK 7 — DAY 3 ▶

### Morning Nourishment

Heb. 2:10-11 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers.

God's eternal purpose is to have a group of sons as His corporate expression. First, His only begotten Son passed through the process and entered into glory, having been fully perfected to be the standard model, the firstborn Son of God, for God's expression. Since the time of Christ's ascension, God has been working to have a mass reproduction of that standard model, His firstborn Son. During the centuries, few Christians have seen this, and as a result, the Lord has been delayed....In His recovery, the Lord is reproducing the standard model, working desperately among us to make every one of us the same as the firstborn Son. This is what it means to be perfected. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 433)

### Today's Reading

For perfection, we need divinity, an uplifted, resurrected humanity, and the terminating crucifixion. Our perfection must include the terminating crucifixion of Christ, for His all-inclusive death puts all the negative things on the other side of the river as a history. We also need to have every inward part of our being permeated with all that He is. Even the smallest part of our being must be saturated with Him. All these are the elements of our perfection. When all this has been wrought into us, we shall have a thorough transformation and be completely conformed to His image. This is glorification, perfection, and the reproduction, the reprint, of the model Son.

The church is both human and divine. This is the nature of the church. The church is a composition of the many sons of God. The church is a corporation of the many brothers of the firstborn Son of God. This is the church....More than forty years ago I saw that the church was a group of real believers in Christ meeting together. This definition of the church is not wrong. Approximately one hundred fifty years ago it was revealed to some of the brothers that the church is not a building of brick and stone. They declared strongly to all of Christendom that the church is not a physical building. It is not a cathedral, chapel, or sanctuary. They declared that the church is a gathering of God's called ones. When true believers in Christ come together, they are the church. We have received much help from this revelation and more than fifty years ago we also began to say that the church is a gathering of God's called saints. We were thankful for the help that we received from those brothers in the last century. Later on, we began to see that the church is not only a gathering of real believers; it is a body, the Body of Christ. If you gather many chairs together, the chairs cannot become a body. If you gather sheep together, they likewise cannot be a body. As everybody knows, a body is an organism with life. It has life tissues, life cells, life nature, life shape, life ability, and life function. The church is deeper, higher, and more profound than just a gathering.

The Lord has shown us the real significance of the church. Praise Him that He has granted us to see that the church has two natures—the human nature and the divine nature. The church has two lives. These lives are not only combined but are also mingled together. The church is an organism with two natures and with two lives combined and mingled together. This is marvelous! Do you realize that the church has two lives? Do you realize that the church has two natures? Do you realize that the firstborn Son of God has two lives and two natures, that He is not only the Son of God but also the Son of Man? The Firstborn has all of the divine attributes as well as all of the human virtues. What we have is not just a little humility or submission. This rich store is much more profound than this. It is unlimited and immeasurable, filled with the divine attributes and the human virtues. The church is such an organism. It is the Body of Christ. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 433, 132-133)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msgs. 14, 36, 38

# ◀ WEEK 7 — DAY 4 ▶

## Morning Nourishment

Heb. 1:9 “You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of exultant joy above Your partners.”

3:14 For we have become partners of Christ, if indeed we hold fast the beginning of the assurance firm to the end.

As we have seen, the church is composed of the many brothers of the firstborn Son of God in resurrection (Heb. 2:12). Because of this, the church is a corporate partnership with Christ.

God has a great operation in the universe. The goal of this operation is to accomplish a glorious expression. This glorious expression is the goal into which we all are going to enter. Our view must be broadened to see that God’s operation in the whole universe is to accomplish a glorious expression of Himself. The Son of God was appointed to accomplish God’s plan. He has been appointed to run this corporation. He was appointed to this office in eternity past. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 137, 175)

## Today’s Reading

Who are we? We are the heirs of salvation. Who are the angels? They are our servants that minister to us continually. How have we become such heirs? Because of Christ. He is the firstborn Son of God, and we are the many sons of God. He is the appointed Heir, and we have been saved to be His joint-heirs. We are partners in the heavenly corporation of “Christ and the Church” and have millions of angels ministering to us. May the Lord open our eyes to see this.

We, the many sons of God, are His “joint-heirs,” inheriting not only salvation but also all things with Him....The Son has been appointed to be the Heir, and we have been saved to be His joint-heirs, sharing in His inheritance. The “so great a salvation” referred to in Hebrews 2:3 is able to save us to such an extent that it brings us into the partnership of His appointment. Thus, we share in whatever He inherits.

Since Christ as the firstborn Son of God is God’s appointed Heir and we as the many sons of God are His joint-heirs, we are His partners. He and we, we and He, are in one partnership sharing the same interests in the divine corporation....Hallelujah, we are His partners! Suppose you become the partner of a billionaire. You would certainly be assured of having great riches, for whatever the billionaire has is yours. You are one with him in a great corporation. God has the biggest corporation in the universe. The name of this corporation is “Christ and the Church.” We are the partners in this corporation. We have not been hired by this corporation; we are the partners. In the entire universe God has only one corporation—“Christ and the Church”—and this corporation has millions of angels to be the serving ones. The Jews should no longer boast in the angels; the angels are our servants (1:14).

Christ is the Heir appointed by God, and in 1:9 we see that this appointed Heir has been anointed. The anointing confirms the appointment. First, God appointed the Son and then He anointed Him. As Christ’s partners, we all partake of His anointing. We are partners of God’s anointed One and we share His anointing. This is a part of the gospel. It is included in the full gospel. Many people talk about the full gospel. The full gospel includes our partnership with Christ. This wonderful item is included in the full gospel. We all need to see that we are partners of Christ and that we share in His anointing. Because of this, by the time we reach 3:1, we have all that we need to be holy brothers. We have the standing, the qualifications, the reality, the life, the nature, the source, and all that we need. We are now the holy brothers.

In His foresight, God decided that this unique Heir needed a group of joint-heirs. God decided that it was not good enough for Christ to enter into the good land alone. God wanted this unique Heir to enter into the good land of the glorious expression of the Divine Being with a group of joint-heirs. The more joint-heirs there are, the more glory there is. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 59-60, 56, 154, 179)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msgs. 5, 16

# ◀ WEEK 7 — DAY 5 ▶

## Morning Nourishment

Heb. 4:9 So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

12:28 Therefore receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us have grace, through which we may serve God well-pleasingly with piety and fear.

In a positive and good sense, the proper church life is God's Sabbath. Now we can understand why the book of Hebrews warns the believers not to miss the Sabbath, telling them to be diligent to enter into it. What is this Sabbath? It is the proper church life.

We must enter into the church life so that God may be expressed and represented on earth today, be satisfied, and find rest. When this happens, God and we shall have our Sabbath rest. If we do not get into the proper church life, we shall miss the rest. However, as we shall see, this is not altogether the meaning of the Sabbath rest in Hebrews. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 197)

## Today's Reading

It is in the church that God is satisfied. If He is not satisfied there, then where is He satisfied? There is only one situation that can satisfy God: a situation in which a group of people has been gained by Him to be His expression and representation....We have been destined and ordained to express and represent Him. Therefore, God's satisfaction and rest are in the church. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 198)

To receive the new covenant and to keep it is to come to the heavenly Jerusalem and to the church (Heb. 8:7-13; 12:22-23). The new covenant, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the church are one. In order to understand this we need to see the link between Galatians and Hebrews. Galatians deals with Judaism, warning the believers not to backslide into Judaism but to stay in grace. Hebrews charges us not to drift into the old covenant but to remain in the new covenant. Chapters 7—10 of Hebrews are on the better covenant, the new covenant. Hebrews 8 indicates that the old covenant is over and that the new covenant has come in to replace it. Then in Hebrews 12 Paul tells us that we have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, and to the church (vv. 22-23).

To come to the new covenant is to come to the New Jerusalem. Without Galatians 4 as a background, it would be very difficult to understand this. Galatians 4 reveals that the mother of the believers, who is the Jerusalem above, the New Jerusalem, is the new covenant of grace symbolized by Sarah. To come to the new covenant is to come not only to the New Jerusalem but also to the church (Heb. 12:23). (The Conclusion of the New Testament, p. 2674)

We come to a very sober matter—the unshakable kingdom (12:25-29). The kingdom which we are receiving is unshakable.

The kingdom is actually the Lord Himself as the kingship within us. We have seen that faith is the Lord Himself as the believing element within us. Now, in the same principle, the kingdom is the Lord Himself as the kingship....The unshakable kingdom which we are receiving is Christ with His enlargement. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 599-600)

The church today is Christ's increase in life, but the eternal kingdom of God is Christ's increase in administration. In life Christ increases to become the church; in administration Christ increases to become the eternal kingdom of God. Hence, Christ is not only the church but also the kingdom of God. Both the church and the kingdom are His increase. (Life-study of Daniel, p. 18)

In the church, we are living in the kingdom of God today. Romans 14:17 is a strong proof that today's church life is the kingdom: "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Revelation 1:9 also proves that we are in the kingdom of God today: "I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus." When John wrote the book of Revelation, he was already in the kingdom of God. These two verses are a strong proof that the church today is the kingdom. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 601-602)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msgs. 19-20, 36, 41, 53-54

## « WEEK 7 — DAY 6 »

### Morning Nourishment

Heb. 13:13 Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

15 Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name.

As indicated by its content, Hebrews 13 was written with a view to a proper church life. Nearly everything mentioned here, such as brotherly love and hospitality, is for the church life, not only for the Christian life. (Heb. 13:1, footnote 1)

Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes, even forever.” The Christ, who is the word which the ministers of the word of God in verse 7 preached and taught, who is the life which they lived, and who is the Author and Perfecter of their faith, is perpetual, unchangeable, and unchanging. He remains the same forever (1:11-12). (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 622)

### Today’s Reading

Hebrews 13:9 mentions “various strange teachings.” For a true and steadfast church life, we must hold on to the unchangeable Christ and not be carried away with various strange teachings used by Satan to cause dissension and even division in the church. Because of the dissension and division caused by strange teachings, the apostle charged people “not to teach different things” (1 Tim. 1:3)....The writer warned the Hebrew believers not to let the teachings carry them away from the church life under the new covenant. There must not be “another Jesus,” “a different gospel,” preached in the church (2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 1:8-9). For a true and steadfast church life, we must hold on to the Christ who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and not be carried away with various strange teachings. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 623)

“Outside the camp” and “within the veil” (Heb. 13:13; 6:19) are two very striking points in the book of Hebrews. To enter within the veil means to enter into the Holy of Holies, where the Lord is enthroned in glory, and to go outside the camp means to come out of religion, whence the Lord was cast in rejection. This signifies that we must be in our spirit, where experientially the practical Holy of Holies is today, and outside religion, where the practical camp is today. The more we are in our spirit, enjoying the heavenly Christ, the more we will come outside the camp of religion, following the suffering Jesus. Being in our spirit to enjoy the glorified Christ enables us to come outside the camp of religion to follow the rejected Jesus. The more we remain in our spirit to contact the heavenly Christ, who is in glory, the more we will go forth outside the camp of religion unto the lowly Jesus to suffer with Him. By contacting Christ in the heavens and enjoying His glorification, we are energized to take the narrow pathway of the cross on earth and bear the reproach of Jesus.

Hebrews 13:15 says, “Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing His name.” This verse presents a profound thought. When we bear the reproach of Jesus and suffer on His behalf, we often groan and do not offer any praise to God. Yet the writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that when we pass through reproach and suffering, we should continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God.

Verse 15 is a continuation of verses 8 through 14. Since in the church life we enjoy the unchanging Christ as grace and follow Him outside religion, we should offer through Him spiritual sacrifices to God. First, in the church we should offer up through Him a sacrifice of praise to God continually. In the church He sings in us hymns of praise unto God the Father (2:12). In the church we too should praise God the Father through Him. Eventually, in the church He and we, we and He, praise the Father together in the mingled spirit. Christ, as the life-giving Spirit, praises the Father in our spirit, and we, by our spirit, praise the Father in His Spirit. This is the best and highest sacrifice that we can offer to God through Him. This is greatly needed in the church meetings. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3840, 3843-3844)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msgs. 55, 57; The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 381



## « WEEK 7 — HYMN

### Hymns, #1322

1

In spirit, in the church we see  
The high estate we're destined for.  
It's higher, vaster, more profound  
Than anything we've seen before.

2

It's not a view in doctrine bare  
But an unveiling of the Christ.  
He's marvelous and far beyond  
Our mental thought or power to share.

3

He's rich, unlimited, profound,  
Immeasurable, and marvelous.  
Yet 'tis a greater wonder still  
He needs heirs of salvation—us.

4

God has accomplished many things—  
He's planned, created, and brought forth.  
The Son is now appointed Heir,  
Administrator of God's worth.

5

But in th' economy of God  
There is not one, but many sons.  
One is the firstborn Son of God  
With many other living ones.

6

Christ will inherit all God's things,  
And we're the heirs of God with Christ.  
We're growing now to be matured;  
As heirs we'll soon be legalized.

7

We're joint-heirs with the firstborn Son,  
Inheriting the universe.  
We're in this corporation vast—  
All partners of Christ and the church.

8

In spirit, in the church, we see  
Our calling of unrivaled worth.  
We're destined, not to go to heaven.



We're destined to be kings on earth.

9

We're paupers, yet we're glorious kings.

Inheriting the kingdom vast,

The earth, God's throne, and e'en all things

And all the Father is and has.

## WEEK 8 — OUTLINE

### **Cooperating with Christ in His Heavenly Ministry by Running with Endurance the Race Set before Us, Looking Away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of Our Faith**

Scripture Reading: Heb. 11:1, 6; 12:1-2; Rom. 10:17

#### « DAY 1 »

- I. “Therefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, put away every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and run with endurance the race which is set before us” (Heb. 12:1):
- A. The cloud is for leading people to follow the Lord (Num. 9:15-22), and the Lord is in the cloud to be with the people (Exo. 13:21-22); in Greek witnesses implies the sense of martyrs (Acts 1:8):
1. With the people of faith, we can have the Lord’s presence and His leading; all the people of faith, the church people, are the cloud; the best way to seek the Lord’s presence is to come to the church.
  2. If anyone is seeking the Lord’s leading, he must follow the cloud, the church; the Lord is in the cloud, meaning that He is with the people of faith.
  3. Since we are the people of faith, we are today’s cloud, and people can follow the Lord by following us; those who seek Him can find His presence with us (cf. 1 Cor. 14:24-25; Psalms 36:8-9; 16:11).
- B. The Christian life is a race; every saved Christian must run the race to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24), not salvation in the common sense (Eph. 2:8; 1 Cor. 3:15) but a reward in a special sense (Heb. 10:35; 1 Cor. 3:14); the apostle Paul ran the race and won the prize (9:26-27; Phil. 3:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:7-8):

#### « DAY 2 »

1. An encumbrance is a weight, burden, or impediment; the runners of the race strip off every unnecessary weight, every encumbering burden, that nothing may impede them from winning the race.
  2. The unique entangling sin in this context was the willful sin of forsaking the assembling together with the saints, of giving up the new covenant way in God’s economy, and of going back to Judaism (Heb. 10:26); both the encumbering weight and the entangling sin would have frustrated the Hebrew believers and restrained them from running the heavenly race in the new covenant way of following Jesus.
- C. We need to run with endurance, asking the Lord to direct our hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ (2 Thes. 3:5):

- 1.This is our love toward God, issuing from the love of God (1 John 4:19), which has been poured out in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).
- 2.This is to endure with the endurance of Christ that we have enjoyed and experienced (cf. Rev. 1:9).

## II. “Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2):

- A.We need to look away unto Jesus with undivided attention by turning away from every other object; Jesus is the Author of faith, the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith:
- 1.The wonderful Jesus, who is enthroned in heaven and crowned with glory and honor (2:9), is the greatest attraction in the universe.
  - 2.He is like an immense magnet drawing all His seekers to Him (S.S. 1:4; Hosea 11:4; Jer. 31:3):
    - a.It is by being attracted by His charming beauty (loveliness, pleasantness, delightfulness) that we look away from all things other than Him (Psa. 27:4).
    - b.Without such a charming object, how could we look away from so many distracting things on earth?

### « DAY 3 »

- B.The faith of the believers is actually not their own faith but Christ entering into them to be their faith (Rom. 3:22 and footnote 1; Gal. 2:16 and footnote 1):
- 1.Our believing is our appreciation of Christ as a reaction to His attraction (Rom. 10:17).
  - 2.In our natural man we have no believing ability; we do not have faith by ourselves.
  - 3.The faith by which we are saved is the precious faith that we have received from the Lord, the God-allotted faith (2 Pet. 1:1; Col. 1:12).
  - 4.When we look away unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b) transfuses us with Himself, His believing element.
  - 5.This faith is not of ourselves but of Him who imparts Himself as the believing element into us that He may believe for us.
  - 6.Hence, Christ Himself is our faith; we live by Him as our faith, that is, by His faith (Gal. 2:20), not our own.

### « DAY 4 »

- C.Faith is a substantiating ability, a sixth sense, the sense by which we substantiate, give substance to, the things unseen or hoped for (Heb. 11:1):
- 1.Substantiating is the ability that enables us to realize a substance.

2. The function of our five senses is to substantiate the things of the outside world, transferring all the objective items into us to become our subjective experience.
3. As the eye is to seeing, the ear to hearing, and the nose to smelling, so faith, our spirit of faith, is the organ whereby we substantiate everything in the unseen spiritual world into us (2 Cor. 4:13):
  - a. We must exercise our spirit of faith, our mingled spirit, to believe and to speak the things we have experienced of the Lord.
  - b. Faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit, not in our mind; doubts are in our mind.
4. We do not regard, look at, the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal (v. 18):
  - a. The Christian life is a life of things unseen (Rom. 8:24-25; Heb. 11:27; 1 Pet. 1:8; Gal. 6:10).
  - b. The degradation of the church is the degradation from unseen things to seen things.
  - c. The Lord's recovery is to recover His church from things seen to things unseen.
5. Faith assures us of the things not seen, convincing us of what we do not see; therefore, it is the evidence, the proof, of things unseen.

## <<    DAY 5    >>

### D. Faith is to believe that God is:

1. Without faith it is impossible to please God, to make God happy (Heb. 11:6a).
2. "He who comes forward to God must believe that He is" (v. 6b; cf. Gen. 5:22-24):
  - a. To believe that God is, is to believe that He is everything to us and that we are nothing (John 8:58; Eccl. 1:2).
  - b. To believe that God is implies that we are not; He must be the only One, the unique One, in everything, and we must be nothing in everything (Heb. 11:5).
  - c. To believe that God is, is to deny our self; in the whole universe He is, and all of us are nothing (Luke 9:23).
  - d. I should not be anything; I should not exist; only He should exist—"It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ" (Gal. 2:20).
  - e. At his conversion the Lord told Saul of Tarsus, "I am Jesus" (Acts 9:5):
    - (1) The Lord was saying, "I am the great I Am; I am the One who is; you must believe that I am and you are not."

(2) Eventually, Saul was over, and Paul came up (13:9).

f. This is faith—"O the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing nothing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here" (J. N. Darby).

## « DAY 6 »

E. Jesus is the Perfecter, the Finisher, the Completer, of our faith (Heb. 12:2a):

1. As we look away unto Him continually, He will finish and complete the faith that we need for the running of the heavenly race (v. 1).

2. We all have the same faith in quality, but the quantity of faith we have depends upon how much we contact the living God so that we may have Him increased in us (Rom. 12:3):

a. Faith in the progressing stage comes through our contacting the Triune God, who is faith in us (1 Thes. 5:17).

b. The way to receive such a faith is to contact its source, the Lord, the processed and consummated God, by calling on Him, praying to Him, and pray-reading His word (Heb. 4:16; Rom. 10:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Eph. 6:17-18; Heb. 4:2).

c. When we contact Him, He is overflowing within us, and there is a mutuality of faith among us; we are encouraged through the faith that is in one another (Rom. 1:12; Philem. 6).

3. Our regenerated spirit, our spirit of faith, is the victory that overcomes the Satan-organized-and-usurped world (1 John 5:4; John 3:6; 2 Cor. 4:13; 1 John 5:18).

4. The great irrepressible and unlimited power of faith motivates thousands to suffer for the Lord, risk their lives, and become overcoming sent ones and martyrs for the carrying out of God's eternal economy, which is in faith (Luke 18:8; Phil. 2:20; Rom. 16:3-4; Acts 20:24; 1 Tim. 1:4; Heb. 12:3; cf. Judg. 8:4).

F. According to Hebrews 12:2, for the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God:

1. The Lord Jesus knew that through His death He would be glorified in resurrection (Luke 24:25-26) and that His divine life would be released to produce many brothers for His expression (John 12:23-24; Rom. 8:29); for the joy set before Him (John 16:20-22), He despised the shame and volunteered to be delivered to the Satan-usurped leaders of the Jews and Gentiles and condemned by them to death.

2. Therefore, God highly exalted Him to the heavens, seated Him at His right hand (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-35), gave Him the name above every name (Phil. 2:9-10), made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), and crowned Him with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9).

3.If we look away unto Him as such a wonderful and all-inclusive One, He will minister heaven, life, and strength to us, transfusing and infusing us with all that He is, that we may be able to run the heavenly race and live the heavenly life on earth; in this way He will carry us through all the lifelong pathway and lead and bring us into glory (v. 10; 2 Cor. 3:16, 18; 1 Pet. 5:4; 2 Tim. 4:8).



# « WEEK 8 — DAY 1 »

## Morning Nourishment

Heb. 12:1 Therefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us,...run with endurance the race which is set before us.

1 Cor. 9:24 Do you not know that those who run on a racecourse all run, but one receives the prize? Run in this way, that you may lay hold.

2 Tim. 4:7 I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.

Hebrews 12:1 says, "Therefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, put away every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and run with endurance the race which is set before us." The cloud is for leading people in following the Lord (Num. 9:15-22), and the Lord is in the cloud to be with the people (Exo. 13:21-22). The children of Israel followed the Lord by the pillar and enjoyed the Lord's presence in the pillar of cloud. All the witnesses of faith, even the martyrs of faith, are a cloud. By this cloud of witnesses we follow the Lord and enjoy His presence. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 550)

## Today's Reading

The saints of the old covenant were only witnesses of faith. None of them was the author, source, perfecter, or finisher of faith. In verse 1 of Hebrews 12 the witnesses of faith are considered as "a cloud of witnesses surrounding us." The Lord was in the cloud to be with His people (Exo. 13:21-22). The children of Israel followed the Lord according to the move of the cloud. Where the cloud was, there the Lord was also. Furthermore, the cloud is for leading people in following the Lord. If you have a heart to seek out the Lord and you read Hebrews 11, you may immediately have the sense that by the people of faith you can have the Lord's presence and His leading. If you have the cloud, you will have the Lord. But if you miss the cloud, you will also miss the Lord. All the people of faith, the church people, are the cloud. The best way to seek the Lord's presence is to come to the church. If anyone is seeking the Lord's leading, he must follow the cloud, the church. The Lord is in the cloud, meaning that He is with the people of faith. Since we are the people of faith, we are today's cloud, and people can follow the Lord by following us. Those who seek Him can find His presence with us. The Lord is where we are, and where we are is the direction in which the Lord is moving in these days.

The Christian life is a race. Every saved Christian must run the race to win the prize (1 Cor. 9:24). This prize is not salvation in a common sense (Eph. 2:8; 1 Cor. 3:15) but a reward in a special sense (Heb. 10:35; 1 Cor. 3:14). The apostle Paul, who has run the race and won the prize, was nearly the only one who likened the Christian life to a race. In the book of Hebrews he charged the Hebrew believers to run the race, saying, "run with endurance the race which is set before us" (12:1).

What is this race? [It is not]...perfection or glorification, for that is the goal of the race. Neither is the race the inward working of the law of life, for that is the process of the race. The race is not even the losing of the soul, because that is the way to run the race; it is not the race itself. In order to answer this question, we need to consider the Lord's word in John 14:6: "I am the way." A race is a way, a course. Because Christ is the way, He is also the race. The race we are running is Christ. Our way is our race. These are not two things, one the way and the other the race.

Because Paul's background was exactly that of the Hebrew believers, he was qualified to be an example in running the race. Galatians 2:2 and 1 Corinthians 9:26 and 27 show how he began to run the race. Philippians 3:5-8 and 12-14 show how he was still running the race. In Philippians 3 we see that Paul was a typical Hebrew believer running the race away from the old Jewish religion. In 2 Timothy 4:7 and 8, written shortly before his martyrdom, he told us that he had finished the race. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 551, 559, 566-567)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msg. 49

## ◀ WEEK 8 — DAY 2 ▶

### Morning Nourishment

Heb. 12:1 Therefore let us also, having so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, put away every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and run with endurance the race which is set before us.

2 Thes. 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ.

The Greek word translated “encumbrance” [in Hebrews 12:1] may also be rendered “weight,” “burden,” “impediment.” The runners in a race must strip off every unnecessary weight, every encumbering burden, that they might have no impediment to winning the race. Notice that here Paul says “us,” not “you,” including himself in this matter. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 563)

### Today's Reading

Hebrews 12:1 mentions “the sin which so easily entangles us.” “Sin” here refers mainly to the thing which entangles us from running the race, just as the willful sin mentioned in 10:26 would keep the Hebrew believers away from the new covenant way in God’s economy. Both the encumbering weight and the entangling sin would frustrate the Hebrew believers and restrain them from running the heavenly race in the new covenant way of following the Jesus who was rejected by Judaism. To the staggering Hebrew believers, the thought of shrinking back and returning to Judaism was an entangling sin. The sin mentioned in 12:1 is particular and unique, for Paul uses the definite article, saying, “the sin.” This unique, entangling sin was the willful sin of forsaking the assembling together with the saints, of giving up the new covenant way, and of going back to Judaism.

There is much opposition to this race. Thus, we must run it with endurance (v. 1). This means that in order to run the race of Christ, we must suffer the opposition with endurance, never growing weary or fainting in our souls. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 564)

In 2 Thessalonians 3:5 Paul concludes, “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ.” The Lord directs our hearts by the leading of the Spirit, through whom the love of God has been poured out into our hearts (Rom. 8:14; 5:5). The love of God in 2 Thessalonians 3:5 is our love toward God that issues from the love of God (1 John 4:19) that has been poured out into our hearts. On the positive side, we **need to enjoy the love of God so that we may love Him in order to live for Him. On the negative side, we need to participate in the endurance of Christ so that we may endure the sufferings as He did to stand against Satan, the enemy of God.** (Life-study of 2 Thessalonians, p. 37)

In Hebrews 12:2 Paul told the Hebrew believers to look away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of faith. The Greek word translated “looking away unto” means to look with undivided attention by turning away from every other object. The runners in a race, such as the hundred yard dash, turn away from everything else and look at the goal with undivided attention. In this verse Paul seemed to be saying, “Hebrew brothers, do not stand there considering and looking around. You must turn away from everything other than Christ and **look to Him with undivided attention.** This is the way to run the race.” The Hebrew believers had to look away from all the things of their situation, away from their old religion and its persecution, and away from all earthly things that they might look unto Jesus who is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God in the heavens. (Life-study of Hebrews, pp. 564-565)

Jesus is the Author of faith. He is the Originator, the Inaugurator, the source, and the cause of faith. (Heb. 12:2, footnote 3)

The wonderful Jesus, who is enthroned in heaven and “crowned with glory and honor” (Heb. 2:9) is the greatest attraction in the universe, like an **immense magnet drawing all His seekers unto Him.** It is by being attracted by His charming beauty that we look away from all things other than Him. Without such a charming object, how could we look away from so many distracting things on this earth? (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 566)

Further Reading: CWWN, vol. 17, pp. 229-240

## « WEEK 8 — DAY 3 »

### Morning Nourishment

Rom. 3:21-22 But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested,...even the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ to all those who believe...

Gal. 2:16 And knowing that a man is not justified out of works of law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, we also have believed into Christ Jesus that we might be justified out of faith in Christ and not out of the works of law...

Faith in Romans 3:22 refers to the faith of Jesus Christ in us, which has become the faith by which we believe in Him.

Faith has an object, and it issues from its object. This object is Jesus, who is God incarnate. When man hears Him, knows Him, appreciates Him, and treasures Him, He causes faith to be generated in man, enabling man to believe in Him. Thus, He becomes the faith in man by which man believes in Him. Hence, this faith becomes the faith in Him, and it is also the faith that belongs to Him.

In God's New Testament economy, God desires that man believe in Jesus, who is God incarnate. If man does not believe in Him, he commits the unique sin before God (John 16:9). However, if man believes in Him, he is righteous to the uttermost before God, and God reckons this faith as his righteousness. At the same time, this faith brings its object, that is, this One who is God incarnate, into those who believe in Him. He is God's righteousness, and God has given Him as righteousness to those who are indwelt by Him (Jer. 23:6). All this is out of, and depends on, the faith that is in Him and of Him (Heb. 12:2). (Rom. 3:22, footnote 1)

### Today's Reading

[In Galatians 2:16] faith in Jesus Christ denotes an organic union with Him through believing. This is related to the believers' appreciation of the person of the Son of God as the most precious One. The believers are infused with the preciousness of Christ through the gospel preached to them. This Christ becomes in them the faith by which they believe and the capacity to believe through their appreciation of Him. This faith creates an organic union in which they and Christ are one. (Gal. 2:16, footnote 1)

In our natural man we have no believing ability. We do not have faith by ourselves. The faith by which we are saved is the precious faith that we have received from the Lord (2 Pet. 1:1). When we look unto Jesus, He as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45) transfuses us with Himself, with His believing element. Then, spontaneously, a kind of believing arises in our being, and we have the faith to believe in Him. This faith is not of ourselves but of Him who imparts Himself as the believing element into us that He may believe for us. Hence, He Himself is our faith. We live by Him as our faith; that is, we live by His faith (Gal. 2:20), not by our own.

As the Author and the source of faith, Jesus is also the Leader, the Pioneer, and the Forerunner of faith. He cut the way of faith and, as the Forerunner, took the lead to pioneer it. Hence, He can carry us in His footsteps through the pathway of faith. As we look to Him as the Originator of faith in His life and in His path on earth, and as the Perfecter of faith in His glory and on His throne in heaven, He transfuses and even infuses us with the faith that He originated and perfected. (Heb. 12:2, footnote 3)

From Hebrews 1:3, this book points us continually to the Christ seated in heaven. In all his other epistles, Paul mainly presents to us the Christ who dwells in our spirit (Rom. 8:10; 2 Tim. 4:22) as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45) to be our life and our everything. But in Hebrews, he points us particularly to the Christ seated in heaven with so many aspects to care for us in every way. In Paul's other epistles, the indwelling Christ is versus our flesh, self, and natural man. In this book, the heavenly Christ is contrasted with the earthly religion and all earthly things. To experience the indwelling Christ we need to turn to our spirit and contact Him. To enjoy the heavenly Christ we need to look away from all things on earth unto Him who is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 565)

Further Reading: Life-study of Hebrews, msg. 50

## « WEEK 8 — DAY 4 »

### Morning Nourishment

Heb. 11:1 Now faith is the substantiation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

2 Cor. 4:13 And having the same spirit of faith according to that which is written, “I believed, therefore I spoke”...

18 Because we do not regard the things which are seen but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

After presenting in the first ten chapters a thorough comparison of Judaism and God’s economy, this book charges the Hebrew believers, who were in danger of shrinking back, to live, to walk, to go on, by faith (10:38-39), that is, not by appearance (2 Cor. 5:7). Then, in Hebrews 11 it goes on to define faith according to the history of faith. Both the eternal inheritance (9:15) and the great reward (10:35) promised by God are things hoped for and things not seen. Faith is the substantiation of things hoped for. Hence, it is the assurance, the confidence, the confirmation, the reality, the essence, the supporting ground, of things hoped for, the foundation that supports the things hoped for. Faith is also the conviction of things not seen. It convinces us of what we do not see. Hence, it is the evidence, the proof, of things not seen. (Heb. 11:1, footnote 1)

### Today’s Reading

The same Greek word [for substantiation in Hebrews 11:1] is used for substance in 1:3, assurance in 3:14, and confidence (in which one knows that he has a sure foundation) in 2 Corinthians 11:17. Moreover, it can be translated confirmation, reality, essence (which denotes the real nature of things, as opposed to the appearance), foundation, or supporting ground. The word means, primarily, substance, but in Hebrews 11:1 it denotes the substantiating of the substance (of the things hoped for); hence, it is translated substantiation. The word substantiate is substance in verb form; to substantiate is to give substance to the reality of the substance not seen. This is the action of faith. Therefore, it says here that faith is the substantiation of things hoped for. (Heb. 11:1, footnote 2)

[In 2 Corinthians 4:13] the spirit of faith is the Holy Spirit mingled with our human spirit. We must exercise such a spirit to believe and to speak, like the psalmist, the things we have experienced of the Lord, especially His death and resurrection. Faith is in our spirit, which is mingled with the Holy Spirit, not in our mind. Doubts are in our mind. Here spirit indicates that it is by the mingled spirit that the apostles lived a crucified life in resurrection for the carrying out of their ministry. (2 Cor. 4:13, footnote 2)

[Faith] is a divine ability which has been infused into us....Whenever we contact God or listen to His word, the substantiating ability which has been infused into our being by God Himself spontaneously begins to realize the things of God, the things hoped for, and the things not seen, and we simply believe....Faith is a special sense in addition to the five senses derived from our natural birth. This sense substantiates the things of God, things which we do not see. (Life-study of Hebrews, p. 535)

We acquired this substantiating sense through the preaching of the gospel. Proper gospel preaching is not merely a matter of teaching; it must also be a matter of transfusion. In order to preach the gospel to sinners, we must first receive something of and from the Lord. Then, as we are preaching, what we have received of the Lord will enter, like electricity, into those who are listening. While we are speaking and the people are looking at and listening to us, something spontaneously and unconsciously will be transfused into them. Although they may shake their heads, not consenting to our preaching, deep within they will believe what we are saying. Although some may say to themselves that it is silly to believe, something within them will continue to react and bring them to the point where they say, “Lord Jesus, thank You. You are so good. Lord, You are my Savior.” Because some element has been transfused into their being, they will be able to believe in the Lord. This is the result of the transfusion of faith by God through a preacher. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3827, 3829)

Further Reading: The Conclusion of the New Testament, msg. 380

# « WEEK 8 — DAY 5 »

## Morning Nourishment

Heb. 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to Him, for he who comes forward to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

John 8:58 Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham came into being, I am.

Hebrews 11:6 says that without faith it is impossible to please God. This is a very strong word in the whole universe. To please God is to make God happy. Without faith it is impossible for you and me to make God happy. God could not and would not be happy with anyone without faith. This shows us the importance of faith.

He who comes forward to God must believe that God is (Heb. 11:6b). This is very simple. God requires you only to believe that He is. The verb to be is actually the divine title of our Triune God. In Exodus 3 Moses asked God what His name was. God answered that His name is I AM WHO I AM (vv. 13-14). Our God's name is the verb to be. He is "I AM WHO I AM." He is the only One. (Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans, pp. 71, 73)

## Today's Reading

When Jesus came, He declared that He was the I Am three times in John 8 [vv. 24, 28, 58],...indicating that He is the very Jehovah. This is why Paul said in Hebrews 11:6, "He who comes forward to God must believe that He is." God is always, eternally, in the present tense.

Do you need God? God is. Do you need food? God is....He told us, "I am...the life" (John 14:6a). "I am the resurrection" (11:25). "I am the door" (10:7, 9). "I am the good Shepherd" (10:11). "I am the bread of life" (6:35). He is the real food....He is the breath (20:22), the living water (4:10, 14), and the tree of life (15:1; 14:6a; Rev. 2:7)....He is everything to us.

What is faith? Faith is to stop yourself from doing anything. You are nothing. Faith joins you with God to make God the only One who is. I am not, so I should not be the one who loves my wife. It should be Christ loving my wife. He is; I am not. I should not be the one to go shopping. He should be the One.

Faith is to stop you from doing anything but to make God everything to you. This equals Paul's word in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." Who lives? It is no longer I. I do not exist. I was terminated. I was crucified. I am finished. It is no more I, but Christ lives in me. Christ lives. Christ is. Christ exists. I do not exist. This is the very essence of the short word believe that God is. To believe that God is implies that you are not. He must be the only One, the unique One, in everything, and we must be nothing in everything.

The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself" (Luke 9:23). This word is the same as what Paul said: "He who comes forward to God must believe that He is" [Heb 11:6]. To deny yourself equals to believe that God is, and to believe that God is equals to deny yourself. This is because you believe that only He is. In the whole universe He is, and all of us are nothing. I should not be anything. I should not exist. Only He should be everything. Only He should exist. So Paul says, "I have been crucified. It is no more I, but Christ."

When the apostle Paul was Saul, he was a very aggressive young man. Everything with him was "I, me, my, and mine."...Everything was Saul of Tarsus. But the Lord Jesus knocked him down on the road to Damascus, and Saul asked, "Who are You, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). The Lord said, "I am Jesus" (v. 5). The Lord was saying, "I am the great I Am. I am the One that is. You must believe that I am and you are not." Eventually, Saul changed his name. Saul was over, and Paul came up (Acts 13:9 and footnote 1).

Darby said: "O the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing nothing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here." This is faith. We care for nothing but His interest. (Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans, pp. 73-77)

Further Reading: Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans, msgs. 7-8



## ◀ WEEK 8 — DAY 6 ▶

### Morning Nourishment

Heb. 12:2 Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God.

2:10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Faith is simply the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not only the Author, the Originator, of faith but also the Perfecter, the Finisher, of faith. He will finish what He originated; He will complete what He inaugurated. If we look to Him continually, He will finish and complete the faith that we need for the running of the heavenly race. Once Christ has originated this faith within us, He will never let it go....As the Completer of faith, He is continually infused into us as the believing element and ability when we pray to the Lord, fellowship with Him, pray over the Bible, attend church meetings, listen to spiritual messages, and read spiritual books. Hence, our faith in Jesus Christ comes from Him; in fact, it is Christ Himself continually infused into us. Such faith brings us into an organic union with Christ; it also continually increases this organic union. The increase of our organic union with Him is the increase, the growth, of Christ within us....This is our faith being perfected by the Lord. (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3831-3832)

### Today's Reading

The way to receive such a faith is to contact its source, the Lord, the processed and consummated God, by calling on Him, praying to Him, and pray-reading His word (Heb. 4:16; Rom. 10:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Eph. 6:17-18). We have to come forward to God's throne of grace to receive mercy and grace. This means that we have to contact God to receive faith....At any time, anywhere, you can contact Him. Just call on Him and say a little word to Him. Then you will receive faith. This faith links you with God and imparts, transfuses, God into you. In this way you will have the living faith. (Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans, pp. 100-101)

According to Hebrews 12:2, for the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame. The Lord Jesus knew that through His death He would be glorified in resurrection (Luke 24:25-26) and that His divine life would be released to produce many brothers for His expression (John 12:23-24; Rom. 8:29). For the joy set before Him, He despised the shame (Heb. 12:2) and volunteered to be delivered to the Satan-usurped leaders of the Jews and condemned by them to death. Therefore, God exalted Him to the heavens, seated Him at His right hand (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-35), gave Him the name which is above every name (Phil. 2:9-10), made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), and crowned Him with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9).

By His death and resurrection He accomplished everything that is needed by both God and man. Now in His ascension He is sitting in the heavens, in the person of the Son of God (Heb. 1:5) and the Son of Man (2:6), in the person of God (1:8) and man (2:6), as the appointed Heir of all things (1:2), the anointed One of God (v. 9), the Author of our salvation (2:10), the Sanctifier (v. 11), the constant Succor (v. 16), the instant Helper (4:16), the Apostle from God (3:1), the High Priest (2:17; 4:14; 7:26), the Minister of the true tabernacle (8:2) with a more excellent ministry (v. 6), the surety and the Mediator of a better covenant (7:22; 8:6; 12:24), the Executor of the new testament (9:16-17), the Forerunner (6:20), the Author and Perfecter of faith (12:2), and the great Shepherd of the sheep (13:20). If we look to Him as such a wonderful and all-inclusive One, He will minister heaven, life, and strength to us, transfusing and infusing us with all that He is, that we may be able to run the heavenly race and live the heavenly life on earth. In this way He will carry us through all the lifelong pathway and lead and bring us into glory (2:10). (The Conclusion of the New Testament, pp. 3832-3833)

Further Reading: Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans, msgs. 9-11



## « WEEK 8 — HYMN

### Hymns, #656

1

“Consider Him,” let Christ thy pattern be,  
And know that He hath apprehended thee  
To share His very life, His pow’r divine,  
And in the likeness of thy Lord to shine.

2

“Consider Him”; so shalt thou, day by day,  
Seek out the lowliest place, and therein stay,  
Content to pass away, a thing of nought,  
That glory to the Father’s name be brought.

3

Shrink not, O child of God, but fearless go  
Down into death with Jesus; thou shalt know  
The power of an endless life begin,  
With glorious liberty from self and sin.

4

“Consider Him,” and thus thy life shall be  
Filled with self-sacrifice and purity;  
God will work out in thee the pattern true,  
And Christ’s example ever keep in view.

5

“Consider Him,” and as you run the race,  
Keep ever upward looking in His face;  
And thus transformed, illumined thou shalt be,  
And Christ’s own image shall be seen in thee.